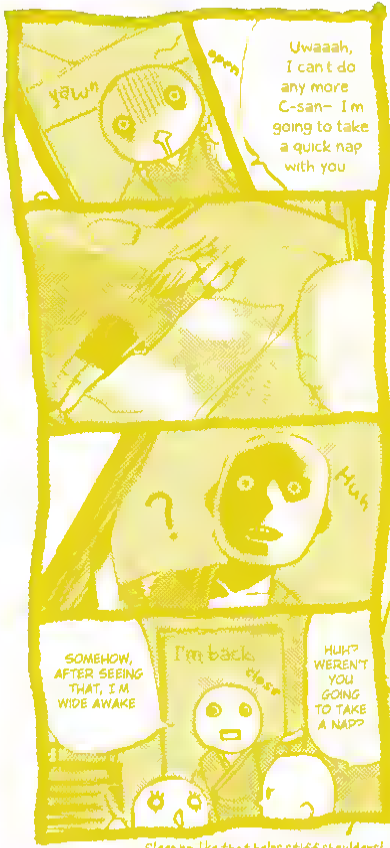
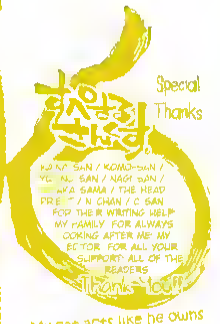
It's like a bad habit.


yawn
Uwaaah, I can't do any more C-san~ I'm going to take a quick nap with you
Huh
?
I'm back.
close
HUH? WEREN'T YOU GOING TO TAKE A NAP?
SOMEHOW, AFTER SEEING THAT, I'M WIDE AWAKE

Sleeping like that helps stiff shoulders!


Special Thanks
KUNO-SAN / KOMORI-SAN / YU-NU-SAN / NAGI-SAN / -WA SAMA / THE HEAD PRE-T / N-CHAN / C-SAN FOR THEIR WRITING HELP MY FAMILY FOR ALWAYS COOKING AFTER ME MY EDITOR FOR ALL YOUR SUPPORT ALL OF THE READERS
Thanks to all!

My cat acts like he owns the place He likes to sleep on my bed on my pillow

See you next time!

高山しのぶ
SHINOBU TAKAYAMA

4 おまつき

おまつき 4

高山しのぶ

あまつき 4

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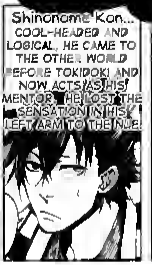
あまつき
四
高山しのぶ

characters

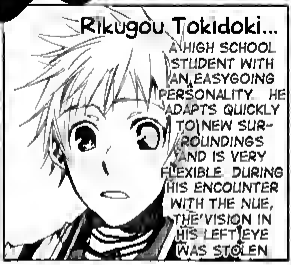
Ginshu

ONE OF THE FOUR HOLY ONES AND THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF SAKAGAMI SHRINE. SHE SUFFERS FROM A DEMON'S CURSE.



Shinonome Kon...

COOL-HEADED AND LOGICAL. HE CAME TO THE OTHER WORLD BEFORE TOKIDOKI AND NOW ACTS AS HIS MENTOR. HE LOST THE SENSATION IN HIS LEFT ARM TO THE NUE.



Rikugou Tokidoki...

A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WITH AN EASYGOING PERSONALITY. HE ADAPTS QUICKLY TO NEW SURROUNDINGS AND IS VERY FLEXIBLE. DURING HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE NUE, THE VISION IN HIS LEFT EYE WAS STOLEN.

Tsuyukusa

A DEMON FRIEND OF BONTEN. LIKE INARI, HE RESENTS HUMANS.

Bonten

A DEMON WITH GREAT POWER AND THE ABILITY TO READ FATE. HE IS ONE OF THE FOUR HOLY ONES.

Kuchiha

A SWORDSWOMAN WHO SAVED TOKI FROM THE NUE. AS A MEMBER OF A CLAN THAT USES THE POWER OF THE DOG GOD, SHE IS DESPISED BY OTHERS. AT FIRST, SHE HATED OPTIMISTIC PEOPLE LIKE TOKIDOKI. BUT SHE'S BEGINNING TO WARM UP TO HIM.

Shamon

A FOSTER FATHER TO KUCHIHA AND AN EXORCIST.

Heihachi

A FRIEND OF KON AND TOKIDOKI. HE MET TSUYUKUSA AND WAS CAUGHT UP IN SUPERNATURAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

Shinshu

GINSHU'S YOUNGER SISTER. SHE IS GOING WITH TOKIDOKI TO FIND A WAY TO BREAK GINSHU'S CURSE.

★ recap ★

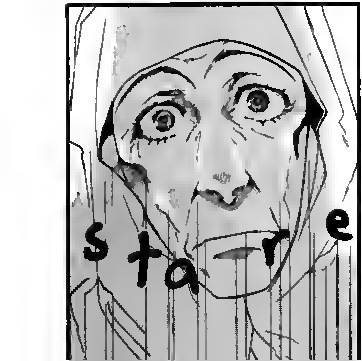
WHILE VISITING A HIGH-TECH VIRTUAL REALITY EXHIBIT ON THE EDO/BAKUMATSU PERIOD, TOKIDOKI WAS ATTACKED BY TWO SUPERNATURAL CREATURES CALLED THE "THE NUE" AND "THE YAKOU", AND FOUND HIMSELF TRAPPED IN VIRTUAL EDO. AS TOKIDOKI STARTED TO FEEL MORE AT HOME IN THIS NEW WORLD, HE ENCOUNTERED THE DEMON BONTEN, THE DEMON-HUNTING PRIESTESS GINSHU, AND HER SISTER, SHINSHU. HE BECAME INVOLVED IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO SHIFT THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THIS WORLD. TO FIND A CURE FOR GINSHU'S CURSE, TOKIDOKI, KUCHIHA AND SHINSHU BEGAN TO INVESTIGATE AROUND TOWN FOR NEWS OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE SUPERNATURAL. MEANWHILE, SHAMON RETURED TO THE SCENE OF ONE OF THESE INCIDENTS. BONTEN SEEKS TSUYUKUSA, AND HEIHACHI RECOUNTS HIS TALE.

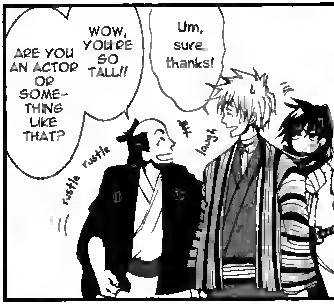
THIS STOREHOUSE IS FULL OF DUST.
flicker
DAMN IT.
DID THEY CALL SOME OTHER PRIEST TO PERFORM AN EXORCISM
THERE ISN'T ANY SPIRITS AT ALL.
IT'S LIKE THE PLACE WAS THROUGHLY PURIFIED.
BUT I CAME TO INVESTIGATE IT'S STRANGE THAT I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING IN HERE.

THIS IS...
...?
WHAT'S THIS?
THIS POWDER... IT'S NOT DUST?
SHH...

Chapter 19
And The Sun Is Hidden
You get lost back 3 spaces
You lose a turn until you roll
If you're playing as the fox, Shinsha or Tomiaki, go back to the beginning
Nihonbashi
Nakamuraya
If you roll you lose a turn. If you roll go back to the beginning. If you roll go forward 7 spaces
Freelancers
If you roll you lose a turn
The police think you look suspicious- Go back 2 spaces
You hear a rumor about Fuxifire. Go forward 3 spaces
Yamamoto Gardening Co. Go forward 3 spaces
Murder in the slums! If you roll you lose a turn
You meet an escaped convict. Lose two turns
Matsuchiyama
Naitou Shinjuku

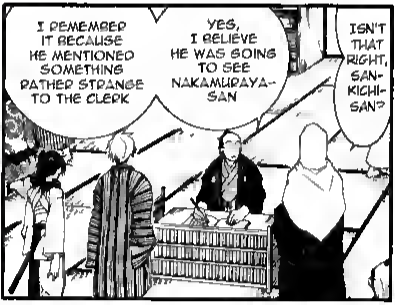
WELL THEN, WE'LL BE GOING. TAKE CARE OF THE GUESTS FOR ME.
GOOD LUCK! TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!!
YES!
HAVE A GOOD TRIP!!
WILL THEY BE OKAY ON THEIR OWN?
SINCE YOU'RE GUESTS, WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA?


stare

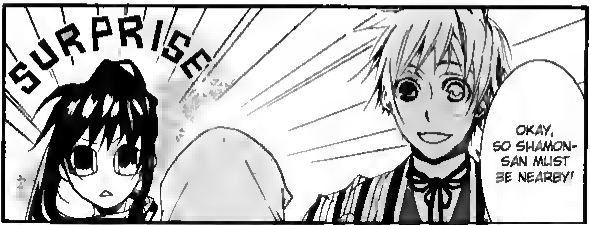

Um, sure. thanks!
WOW, YOU'RE SO TALL!!
ARE YOU AN ACTOR OR SOME-THING LIKE THAT?
rustle rustle
laugh

I KNEW IT!
YOU'RE THAT BOY!
YOU'RE A STRANGE ONE SO I KNEW IT WAS YOU!!
.....
Ah...
YOU'RE THE DOCTOR FROM THAT TIME!!
AH, THAT'S A GOOD BOY. I THOUGHT YOU'D FORGOTTEN ME
lausA
AND AFTER I HELPED YOU BACK THEN, TOO
Ah!
Oh no, that's not it!
I felt a lot better after you examined me
BUT THEN WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A MEDICINE SHOP TODAY—?
IS IT BECAUSE OF YOUR EYE?

NO, MY EYE IS OKAY. I'M JUST GOING ON AN ERRAND FOR SOMEONE.
AN ERRAND? OH!
IS SHAMON HERE WITH YOU?
HUH?
SHAMON-SAN?


I REMEMBER IT BECAUSE HE MENTIONED SOMETHING RATHER STRANGE TO THE CLERK
YES, I BELIEVE HE WAS GOING TO SEE NAKAMURAYA-SAN
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, SAN-KICHI-SAN?

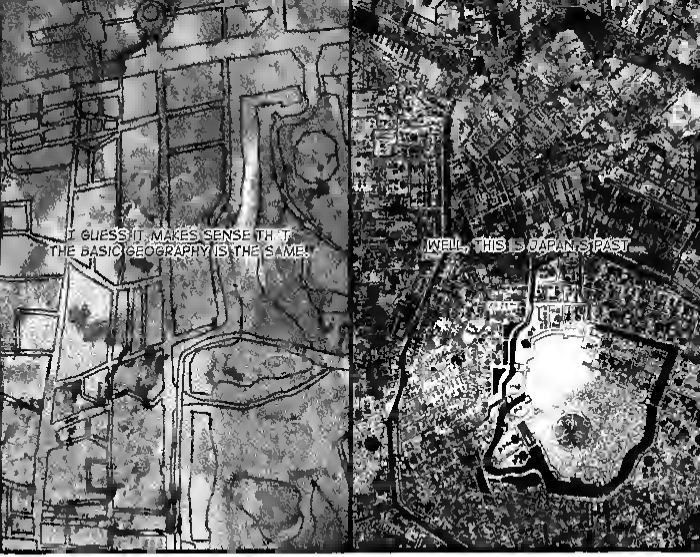
I HEARD HE WAS IN THE AREA, THOUGH...
HE'S NOT HERE?


SURPRISE
OKAY, SO SHAMON-SAN MUST BE NEARBY!

Don't turn around don't turn around!
A FREAKY AURA BEHIND ME...
UGH...
I FEEL...
stare
THIS CONVERSATION HAS TAKEN A TURN FOR THE WEIRD...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH WHAT SHAMON-SAMA DOES WHEN HE'S WORKING? ISN'T THAT HIS BUSINESS?
AH...
AND YOU'RE HERE TOO...
surprise
IT'S STRANGE TO SEE YOU HERE...
I SHOULD GET GOING...
BUT IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD ABOUT NAKAMURAYA'S ACCIDENT...
YES... BUT IT DOESN'T EXACTLY SET MY MIND AT EASE...
SHAMON-SAMA MUST BE RIGHT AROUND HERE!
WELL... THAT'S WEIRD!

I GUESS IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT
HEY, WHICH WAY IS THE NAKAMURAYA SHOP FROM HERE?
UHH...
NOPE
YOU DON'T KNOW?
Hmph!
BUT HERE WE GO ANYWAY...
sigh
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE A MAP?
OH!
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT NAKAMURAYA-SAN? HIS SHOP ISN'T FAR AWAY
Please help yourself. They're sushi wrapped in fried tofu

THIS IS A MAP THAT DOCTORS USE TO MAKE THEIR HOME VISITS
HERE'S OUR SHOP.
AND HERE'S NAKAMURAYA-SAN'S HOME.
SEE, IT'S A MAP OF NIHONBASHI.
BUT IT'S AT A REDUCED SCALE SO HERE IS A LARGER ONE.
THIS IS NIHONBASHI, AND THAT THERE IS THE CASTLE
AND THIS AREA IS NAITOU SHINJUKU, WHERE MY BROTHER HANGS AROUND
THAT'S THE SUMIDA RIVER.
THE SHAPE OF THIS RIVER LOOKS JUST LIKE THE CANAL THAT GOES BY THE IMPERIAL PALACE IN TOKYO...
EH?
SO IS EDO CASTLE THE MODERN-DAY IMPERIAL PALACE?
HUH? THIS MAP LOOKS KIND OF FAMILIAR.



'Large Maps of Edo' (Kagoshima University Press)

THEN THIS MUST BE SHINOBAZU POND IN MODERN-DAY UENO?
I GUESS THIS AREA IS CHIDORIGAFUCHI, WHERE THE NIHON BUDOUKAN IS?
THE NAMES AND SHAPES OF THE RIVER AND THE POND HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
IF THIS IS THE SUMID... RIVER...

T/N: The Budōkan is a huge stadium for rock concerts and so on
Ueno is a a famous historical district in downtown Tokyo with a large park and a zoo

I WAS JUST FEELING A CONNECTION...
AND THEN SUDDENLY, I FELT SO ALONE...
WEIRD...
TOKI?
HUH?
OH, IT'S NOTHING...
SQUEEZE
I MEAN, WHY WOULD SHAMON-SAMA COME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?
...BUT IT IS WEIRD, ISN'T IT?
FOR NORMAL CONSULTATIONS, THE CLIENT JUST COMES TO THE TEMPLE
AND IF IT'S NOT A FUNERAL...
THEN THERE'S ONLY ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION

AN EXORCISM.
DON'T TELL ME THAT LITTLE INCIDENT—
IT COULD JUST BE A COINCIDENCE—
WE PROBABLY OUGHT TO MAKE SURE—
SO FOR HIM TO VISIT SOMEBODY HE DOESN'T REALLY KNOW,
HE MUST HAVE SOME KIND OF BUSINESS THERE—
NEWS TRAVELS FAST... BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S ANYBODY WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWN

Um... well Shinshu-chan...
?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
CAN I COME TOO?
That's kind of...
I mean, there could be demons...
!
You're so mean!!! Let me come too!!
SHINSHU-CHAN...

Don't leave me by myself.
Don't go.
There's got to be... Something I can do.
We should all go!!
What!? You can't do that, Kuchiha!!
...THEN WHAT IF I GO ALONE?
So? I'm not scared!!
THERE COULD BE DEMONS THERE.
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM!!
WHAT?
HUH!?
Huh?
THAT'S ENOUGH YOU'RE NOT NEEDED

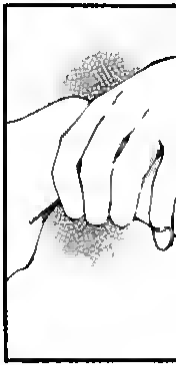
WOW, YOU'VE GOT ALL THE GIRLS FIGHTING OVER YOU, HUH?
IT MUST BE ROUGH BEING SO GOOD-LOOKING!
he he he he
tap
Wait!
YOU'LL JUST GET IN THE WAY!!!
I...
YOU NEVER LISTEN...!!!
I won't get in the way!!
Ah
SAKICHI! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TALKING TO A GUEST LIKE THAT?
EEE SORRY ABOUT THAT BOSS BUT THEY'RE DOING IT RIGHT IN THE OPEN SO IT'S KINDA HARD NOT TO OVERHEAR
Ah... ah...
Wh... whaaat?

THOSE TWO HAVE IMPORTANT WORK TO DO, SO WE MUST HURRY THEM ON THEIR WAY.
HUH?
THAT IS TRUE. ALLOW ME TO SHOW YOU HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS KIND OF SITUATION.
RIGHT?
IF YOU STAY HERE AND LET TOKI AND KUCHIHA GO OUT ALONE THEY'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE AROUND MUCH EASIER.
PLEASE LISTEN FOR A MOMENT. YOU'RE A PRINCESS, AREN'T YOU? MANY PEOPLE WOULD RECOGNISE YOU, RIGHT?
No! I wanna go too!
I, BENI,
LEAVE THAT TO YOU.
UM... IS THIS REALLY OKAY?
SLIRE
AH
PLEASE HURRY BACK, YOU TWO. IF YOU DISAPPEAR, MY BROTHER WOULD BE ANGRY

hmph
...SORRY, SHINSHU-CHAN.
WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK, SO JUST WAIT FOR A LITTLE WHILE, OKAY?
IT'S ALRIGHT. DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER.
BOW
YOU'RE SO KIND THAT HELPING OTHERS COMES NATURALLY TO YOU.
GINSHU-SAMA IS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THAT QUALITY AGAIN.
SEN-SAN...

SAKICHI, PLEASE SHOW OUR GUESTS THE DOOR.
YES, MISS.
Pull
Hey!
Huh?
Ah!
WELL NOW THAT THAT'S ALL TAKEN CARE OF, LET'S GO!!

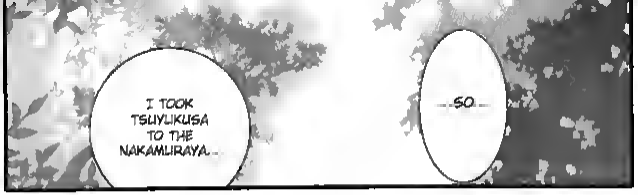
HAVE A SAFE TRIP!
flip



...YEAH.
AND WE CAN'T JUST GO BACK.
ACTUALLY, I'M FEELING LUCKY.

...IS THIS REALLY A GOOD IDEA, TOKI? I THINK YOU'RE BAD LUCK.
That was just cruel.
OWWWWW

AND YOU AND HER HAVE THE SAME HANDS
Here you go
THAT GIRL BENI-SAN, I GET THE FEELING SHE'S IN THE INFORMATION BUSINESS LIKE KUROTOBI-SAN
YOU'RE BOTH KINDA FLASHY BUT NICE AND LEVEL-HEADED
AND YOU'VE GOT STRONG HANDS
YEAH
Um
MY HANDS?
AND IT'S GROSS
HUH?
What?
KINDA CREEPY
THEY'RE ALL CALLUSED FROM HOLDING A SWORD
YEAH OKAY
I SEE WHAT YOU'RE THINKING


I TOOK TSUYUKUSA TO THE NAKAMURAYA...
...SO...

BUT ON THE WAY, WE GOT ATTACKED BY MONSTERS...
Oh?

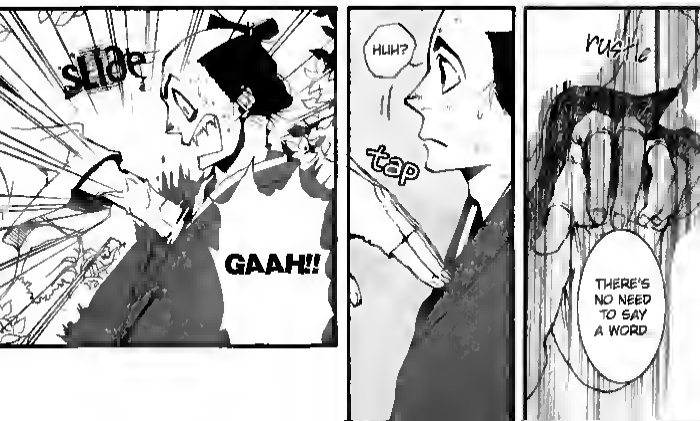
SO YOU WERE ACTING AS TSUYUKUSA'S GUIDE. I'VE GOT IT.

IT'S KIND OF HARD TO EXPLAIN...
sniff
stare stare stare
LEAVE HIM ALONE, SUSUTAKE.
You idiot.

...
Um...

UTSUBUSHI, COULD YOU TRACK HIM BY SCENT?
I am sooo bored.
SO THEN HE WAS LOOKING FOR THE FOX TO SETTLE THEIR DEAL?
Hmph
Oh dear...
HE MUST HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH THE FOX ALL ALONG...
I thought everything would turn out okay... but what's wrong with these people? This conversation is making me nervous
I'm scared...
WELL, COULD YOU SEARCH FOR THE SMELL OF HUMAN BLOOD?
I'M SORRY
UNLESS HE'S NEARBY, I CAN'T DISTINGUISH HIS SCENT
WHAT!? I STINK!?
THAT MAN OVER THERE STINKS SO STRONGLY OF HUMAN BLOOD THAT I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD
that guy's tattoo is so flashy, maybe he's a criminal...
I must
ahahaha what's going on...
AREN'T YOU BEING TOO ALOOF AND INDIFFERENT?
YOU ALWAYS MAKE THE DECISIONS AND YOU DON'T TELL US ANYTHING
AREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO HELP EACHOTHER? SHOULDN'T WE BRING HIM BACK?
UM, BONTEN? TO FIND TSUYUKUSA...
MAYBE WE SHOULD ASK THE FOX FOR HELP?

Because I, I've got information and we could work together and I'd tell you where to go and.
Are you gonna go save him now!?
Hey!
H


SLICE
GAAH!!
HUH?
tap
rustle
THERE'S NO NEED TO SAY A WORD.

!?
GAAAAAAH!!
Eep!!
I always find this rather interesting.
Uuh... that ain't right.
whoosh
THIS WAY IS...
MUCH FASTER.
EEEEEeee

UM...
SORRY...
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HIM, I'LL TELL YOU...
< sfx: crowd noise, people talking >
EXCUSE ME!
HAVE YOU SEEN SHAMON-SAN AROUND HERE?
I'M MATAOJI, ONE OF THE CLERKS.
PLEASE COME IN.
WELL, WE HEARD THAT SHAMON-SAN WAS HERE...
SO...
UM... I MEAN

SO... YOU KNOW THE PRIEST?
glance
STRANGE RUMORS HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING AMONGST THE STAFF IT'S GOTTEN OUT OF HAND
WE'VE HAD OUR HANDS FULL AT THIS SHOP...
OH...
I'M SORRY.
Wah...
AH, YEAH...
I MUST LOOK SUSPICIOUS...
YOU ALWAYS LOOK WEIRD.
That freelancer guy is weird, too.
Hmph.
I'M KIND OF GETTING USED TO THEM
THERE'S NOTHING SINISTER ABOUT THE RUMORS... IT'S JUST SOME PEOPLE'S IDEA OF FUN
FORGIVE ME
whoosh
EEEE

shock
Hethachi-san and a demon!?
Wh... what's going on
NO WAY...!!
IS THAT BONTEN GUY HERE...!?
WHAT'S WRONG, TOKI?
whoosh
whoosh

Amatsuki

By Takayama Shinobu

raw scans: s[illegible]ove

translator: sanada

cleaning: shyue

and

nekura_yamiya

editing: chez_[illegible]ters

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http://community.livejournal.com/amatsuki_manga/

SO YOU'VE COME TO THIS...
YOU'RE A DISGRACE.
THERE'S NO REASON TO DESPISE HUMAN BLOOD NOW
PERHAPS I SHOULD NOT HAVE COME
You can't stop me from crushing this man.
The power given to me by Yakou-dono is disgraceful?
The disgrace is the great power granted to demons like you.

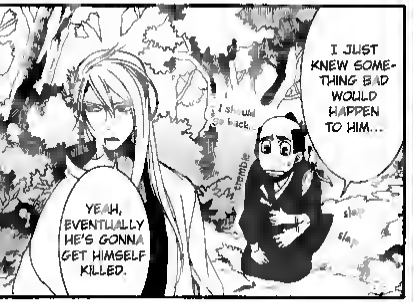
Chapter 20 - A Lush, Dark Forest

I MUST BE AN IDIOT...
THIS IS A PROTEC-TIVE CHARM.
SINCE THE POWER IS WRITTEN INTO IT, IT'S ONLY USEFUL IF IT'S INTACT.
USE THIS.
!
〈sfx: rp〉
I CAN HEAL SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
Ow.
...COME ON, IT'S NOT THAT BAD.
KOH!!

HEIHACHI!
NO
WAIT
MAYBE WE'LL MEET AGAIN SOMETIME.
SEE YA.
.....
FOR A HUMAN, YOU'RE AN INTERESTING GUY.
THERE S STILL SOME-THING
I HAVEN'T
TOLD YOU YET.

Chapter 20 - A Lush, Dark Forest

HE NEVER THINKS ABOUT THE CONSE-QUENCES..
I KNEW IT...
?


I JUST KNEW SOME-THING BAD WOULD HAPPEN TO HIM...
YEAH, EVENTUALLY HE'S GONNA GET HIMSELF KILLED.

Utsubusu!! Susutake!! That idiot is in Nihombashi!!
Now hurry the hell up!
SHUT UP.
I'LL SLAP YOU
What!? But.. don't you care!!?

That stupid maggot!!
He ripped up the charm I made! Now what's he going to do!?

UM
ALRIGHT... BUT HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN I CARRY?
LITSU-BUSHI
FLY US TO NIHONBASHI AS FAST AS YOU CAN
BUT WHAT'S THAT BRAT DOING THERE?
IT'S PRETTY FAR.
AND WE HAVE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THE NIHON-BASHI AREA DON'T WE?
YEAH
I'LL GET A MAP.
FINE. FINE. I'LL MANAGE SOME-HOW...
GRAB
Me too!
Me too!
Me too!
Me too!
!!!
YOU KNOW TOKI!?
HEY.
DO YOU KNOW A HUMAN BY THE NAME OF RIKUGOU TOKIDOKI?

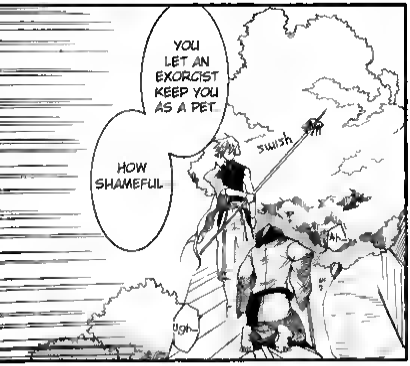
!
I THOUGHT SO
IF HE'S A PART OF THIS THEN IT'S DANGEROUS FOR US TO GET INVOLVED
TAKE CARE OF THE GIRL UNTIL I RETURN,
RIKUGOU
I'M NOT TRYING TO BE CRUEL
BUT TSUYU-KUSA
BUT WITH HIS LEFT EYE
HE CAN PROBABLY SEE WHAT I CAN

OH, YEAH! WE HAVEN'T EVEN INTRODUCED OURSELVES YET!
I'M HIBIKI, NICE TO MEET YOU!
HAHAHA
HEY
THIS IS THE NAKAMURAYA, RIGHT?
I'M TSUYUKUSA
NICE TO MEET YOU TOO
IMPACT
...TSUYU-KUSA?

RUNNING RUNNING RUNNING
whoosh
KUCHI-HA!!

Tch!
Are you some kind of exorcist!?
WHAT BUSINESS DOES A DEMON LIKE YOU HAVE IN THIS PLACE!?
IF I DON'T LIKE YOUR ANSWER, I REALLY WILL KILL YOU!
snap
OH?
whoosh
YOU FILTHY DOG.
ARE YOU SOME KIND OF MUTT BREED?
HMM?

crackle
crackle
A WOLF THAT'S BEEN DOMESTICATED BY HUMANS IS JUST A DOG, ISN'T IT?
I CAN'T EVEN TELL THE DIFFERENCE NOW


YOU LET AN EXORCIST KEEP YOU AS A PET.
HOW SHAMEFUL
swish
Ah
Ugh

Ugh.
shake
shake
Ah

RUNNING

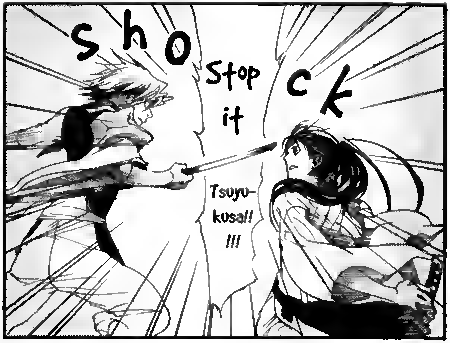
〈 sfx: slam 〉

AH

AHH

clank
clink
clang
hit
clang
hit
clink
bang
clang
Tch..
Just like a demon..
hit
THIS IS SUCH A PAIN!
OH, PLEASE
I'M NOT DOING THIS FOR FUN!

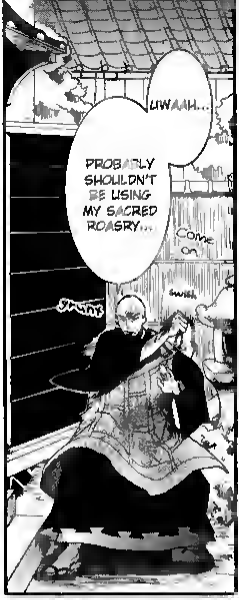
YOU


sho
Stop it
ck
Tsuyu-kusa!!!

I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE A DEMON
I THINK IT'S BECAUSE BONTEN KNOWS
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
YEAH...
YOU'RE A HAKUTAKU!!
...
whoo sh
Toki!! Kuchiha!!! RUN!!!

GAH!
< sfx: hiss >
SN
AP
GET INSIDE!
QUICKLY!
huff
Hey!
Yah
AH!
SHAMON-SAN!
YOU TOO, COME ON!!
EH!?
< sfx: running >
< sfx: running >
< sfx: running >

.....
PRIEST, TELL THAT BOY THIS...


UWAAH...
PROBABLY SHOULDN'T BE USING MY SACRED ROASRY...
Come on
Swish
Shit...!!
Damned priest!!!
kiss
kiss
kiss

YOU CAN'T RUIN. YOU WON'T GET ANY PERFERENTIAL TREATMENT.
?

...DID HE MEAN TOKIDOKI?

IF YOU WISH TO LIVE, THEN DISAPPEAR BEFORE MY HATRED GROWS!!

AH
WHAT ARE YOU PEOPLE DOING!? WHO WAS THAT MAN!?
KUCHIHA?
YOU CAN'T JUST KILL PEOPLE HERE! THIS ISN'T A PLACE FOR YOUR GAMES!
Ah-
Gasp
Ahhh-
Ah-
Gasp
Shake
Gasp
Shake
!!
squeeze
WHAT WILL I DO IF CUSTOMERS HEAR THIS RACKET OUT FRONT!?
I TOLD YOU I HATED THIS!
I DID NOT AGREE TO THIS!!

SHE WAS JUST TRYING TO DRIVE THE DEMON AWAY!
EH?

COULD YOU PLEASE BE QUIET?
WHAT?

WH...T DO YOU KNOW!? YOU'RE JUST A LITTLE BRAT, AREN'T YOU!?
ALL THREE OF YOU ARE TH...T PRIEST'S ACCOMPLICES, RIGHT!?

EVEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CAME TO INVESTIGATE THOSE STRANGE RUMORS
AND YOU DIDN'T WANT THE GOVERNMENT POKING AROUND, DID YOU!?

BUT
BUT WHY WOULD WE DO THAT...
THAT DEMON OR WHATEVER YOU SAY IT WAS THAT WAS JUST A PART OF THE PLOT!
AHA, SO WE'D TURN TO THAT PRIEST IN OUR PANIC!
IT WAS A HUGE

THAT'S WHY I SAID IT WAS A STRONG ONE.
Are you two alright?
AND A STRONG DEMON, AT THAT
BUT IT LOOKED LIKE A HUMAN, DIDN'T IT?
WHAT!?
eek
THAT WAS A REAL DEMON.
!?
SO A DEMON THAT CAN BE SEEN BY ORDINARY PEOPLE IS VERY POWERFUL.
slam
THEY'RE MORE SPIRIT THAN HUMAN
A DEMON'S BASE FORM IS INSUBSTANTIAL
!
SHOCK
WHAT ABOUT THAT LARGE PIECE OF WOOD IN THE STOREHOUSE?
SO WHAT EXACTLY HAVE YOU BEEN DOING TO PROVOKE THAT DEMON'S ANGER?
I...
I DON'T KNOW! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!?

OH.
THAT WAS BOUGHT FROM THE LUMBER YARD IN NAITOU SHINJUKU
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A TENANT CRAFTSMAN WORK ON IT
WELL, THEN
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?
GLARE
!?
THIS WAS STUFFED INTO A HOLE IN THE WOOD AND COVERED WITH A WOODEN PLUG
I BET YOU DIDN'T BUY IT WITH THIS POWDER IN IT, HUH
Opium!?
MAYBE YOU MIX IT IN WITH TOBACCO AND SELL IT THAT WAY, I DON'T KNOW.
YOU'RE SELLING ILLEGAL DRUGS, AREN'T YOU?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU PEOPLE DID TO PISS OFF THAT DEMON, BUT YOU'RE SURE GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF PISSED-OFF HUMANS TO DEAL WITH.
H...
WAH
UWAAH

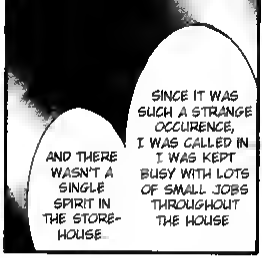
crash
WHAT'S WRONG, BOSS!?
WE'LL GET'EM!
GRAB THEM!!
<SFX: running>

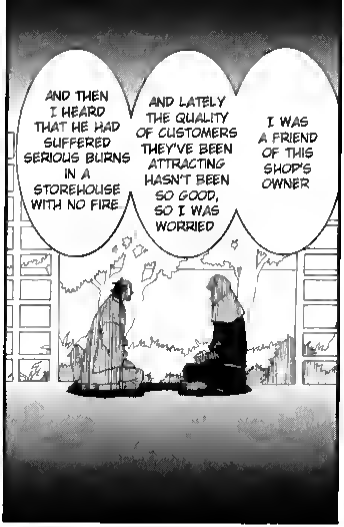
H...
HELP!!! HELP!!!
THEIVES!!! CATCH THEM!!!
!?
running

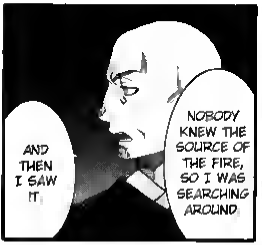
THERE THEY ARE!
LOCK THEM IN THE STORE-HOUSE!
GET THEM!!
wah!
No, Kuchiha!!
grab
Can I kill them!?
Surprises are good for you!
AHAHA HAHAHA!! WELL, THAT WAS UNEX-PECTED!!
Hmm!?

WE'LL BE BACK IN A WHILE!
cough
cough
WAS IT YOU WHO INJURED YOUR BOSS?
DON'T FOOL WITH ME!!
I'M A BUSINESSMAN. I DON'T PLAY WITH PEOPLE'S LIVES!
Ow!
THUMP
‹ sfx slam ›

DIDN'T YOU COME HERE TO DO AN EXORCISM?
SHAMON-SAMA, WHAT IS THAT?
HMMMMMM
HMM. THERE AREN'T ANY OTHER WITNESSES BUT I DON'T THINK HE DID IT


AND THERE WASN'T A SINGLE SPIRIT IN THE STORE-HOUSE
SINCE IT WAS SUCH A STRANGE OCCURENCE, I WAS CALLED IN
I WAS KEPT BUSY WITH LOTS OF SMALL JOBS THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE


AND THEN I HEARD THAT HE HAD SUFFERED SERIOUS BURNS IN A STOREHOUSE WITH NO FIRE
AND LATELY THE QUALITY OF CUSTOMERS THEY'VE BEEN ATTRACTING HASN'T BEEN SO GOOD, SO I WAS WORRIED
I WAS A FRIEND OF THIS SHOP'S OWNER


AND THEN I SAW IT
NOBODY KNEW THE SOURCE OF THE FIRE, SO I WAS SEARCHING AROUND

AND I HAVE A FEELING THAT DEMONS WERE MOST DEFINITELY INVOLVED
YEAH.
DOESN'T IT LOOK KIND OF BURNT?
THAT PIECE OF WOOD?

HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT GUY BEFORE?
TOKI, TELL ME HONESTLY.

HMM
MAYBE YOU SHOULD COVER YOUR MOUTHS AND NOSES WITH A CLOTH
BUT ISN'T THE STORE-HOUSE SAFE?
THERE WAS A HOLE IN THE OPIUM BAG, SO SOME OF IT SPILLED IN HERE

IT'S NOT THAT
HOW CAN I PUT THIS... IT'S LIKE...
WHAT IF THAT BONTEN GUY DID SOMETHING TO MY LEFT EYE...
MAYBE I KNOW SOMEBODY WHO KNOWS HIM...

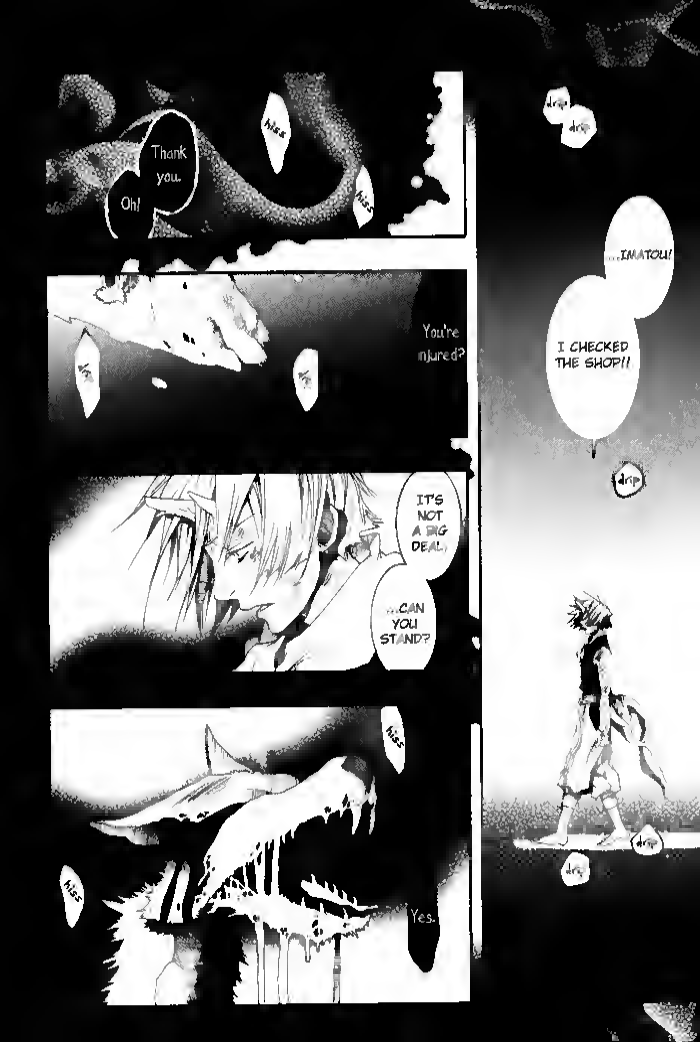
IT WASN'T BAD WITH THE DOOR OPEN, BUT NOW IT MIGHT NOT BE SUCH A GOOD IDEA TO BREATHE IT IN
WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE...

I GUESS MAYBE THAT FRIEND OF OURS DID GET WRAPPED UP IN THIS...

IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO STOP HIM?
THAT'S CERTAINLY STRANGE, BUT GO ON
YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THAT DEMON?

THIS ISN'T LOOKING GOOD
AND I'M SURE HE DOESN'T INTEND TO LET US OUT OF HERE UNTIL THEN
HE'LL PROBABLY CONTACT SOME MAGISTRATE HE TRUSTS TOMORROW...
AND WHAT ABOUT THAT WORKER GUY?
WHAT IF... HE WAS REALLY TRYING TO HELP SOMEONE?
WE NEED TO FOLLOW THAT DEMON

BY KILLING SOMEONE?
NOT BY PROTECTING SOMEONE...
BUT...


drip
drip
...IMATOU!
I CHECKED THE SHOP!!
drip
drip
drip
...CAN YOU STAND?
IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL.
You're injured?
Thank you.
Oh!
Yes.

MIGHT WE NOT...
TSUYU-KUSA...
YOU LIVE HERE IN MY TREE, SO YOU'RE LIKE MY CHILD.
DEMON'S PROMISE IS ABSOLUTE
FIND A WAY TO BRING BACK THE PAST
I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU
YOU'RE ALL...
SO INCRE-DIBLY
STUPID
DAMN IT, I WONDER IF JUST A PART OF BON'S WRITTEN CHARM WOULD HELP
No.
I'm Fine.
I won't disappear until I'm reunited with my master.
Fwoo

Slam
Slam
Slam
Slam
Slam
Slam
THIS BAD DREAM...
COME ON, LET'S GO, IMATOLI.
AND REWIND THE SPOOL OF LOVE?
ENDS TONIGHT.

(sfx: slam)

Amatsuki

By Takayama Shinobu

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Chapter 21 -
Two Sides of the Konotegashiwa

I GUESS IT WON'T OPEN...
sigh
YOU CAN COME DOWN NOW, KUCHIHA

OKAY

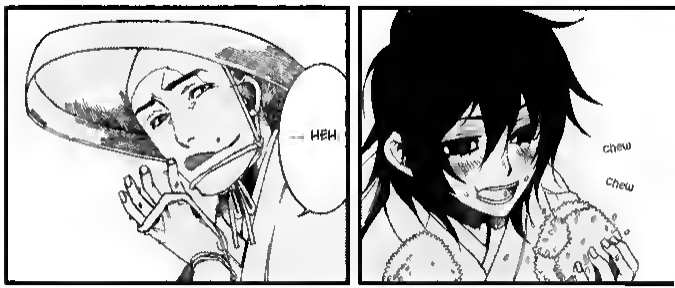
HMM...
IT SEEMS THAT THERE ISN'T MUCH WE CAN DO...
Oh no
jump
crash
fwoosh

bang
bang

growl
YEAH...
WITH ALL OF THIS DUST IN OUR THROATS, WE'D DIE OF THIRST IN THE SUMMER
cough
WELL, AT LEAST IT'S SPRING-TIME
Oh no, that growling sound must have been Kuchiha's stomach
ACTUALLY...
HAHAHA!
I'M PRETTY HUNGRY TOO
shake
shake
shake

IF YOU DON'T WANT IT, I'M GONNA EAT IT.
...
DO YOU WANT ONE?

...
chomp
chomp
surprise


HEH.
chew
chew

YOU'VE GROWN SO MUCH!
ARE YOU SAYING I'M FAT!!?
WELL, YOU HAVE FILLED OUT A BIT.
WHAT!?
Ahahaha
COMPARED TO WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, I MEAN
cough
cough

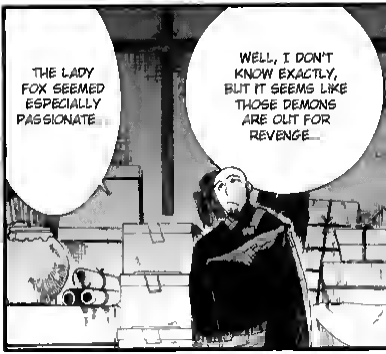
IT WAS JUST THAT YOU REMINDED ME OF SOMEONE, SHAMON-SAN.
HUH?
OH NO...
Huh?
OH...
YEAH...
WHO'S THAT?
YEAH...
HMM?
I GUESS YOU COULD CALL HIM MY GUARDIAN... OR MAYBE A BIG BROTHER.
LATELY I'VE BEEN FEELING REALLY NOSTALGIC.

I WISH I COULD GO BACK
LIKE FAMILY...
Master!
Master!
YOU KIND OF REMIND ME OF HIM
WELL HE GOT CALLED A LOT OF THINGS
BUT MAYBE PEOPLE SAW HIM AS A LAZY BUM.
THINKING ABOUT HIM BRINGS BACK SOME GOOD MEMORIES AND SOME BAD ONES.

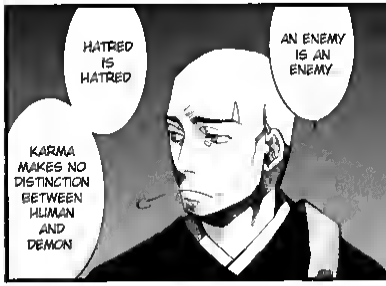
!
IF SOMEONE LIKE THAT IS TAKEN FROM YOU, OF COURSE YOU'RE GOING TO BE ANGRY
Hmm
EVEN IF YOU'RE A DEMON...
DO YOU MEAN...
shock
OMG!
THAT DEMON FROM BEFORE?
AH...
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT AT ALL...!
I said that out loud!?
HOW CAN I SAY THAT I "SAW" WITH MY LEFT EYE...
BUT OTHERWISE THERE'S NO EXPLANATION FOR HOW I KNEW ABOUT HEIH. CHI AND THAT DEMON...
Hmmmm...

...BUT DEMONS CAN CUT THEIR TIES TO THIS WORLD AND LEAVE.
WHAT'S BEHIND THIS? IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

I DON'T LIKE YOUR EXPLANATION!
grr...
waaahh!!
Never mind!
sparkle

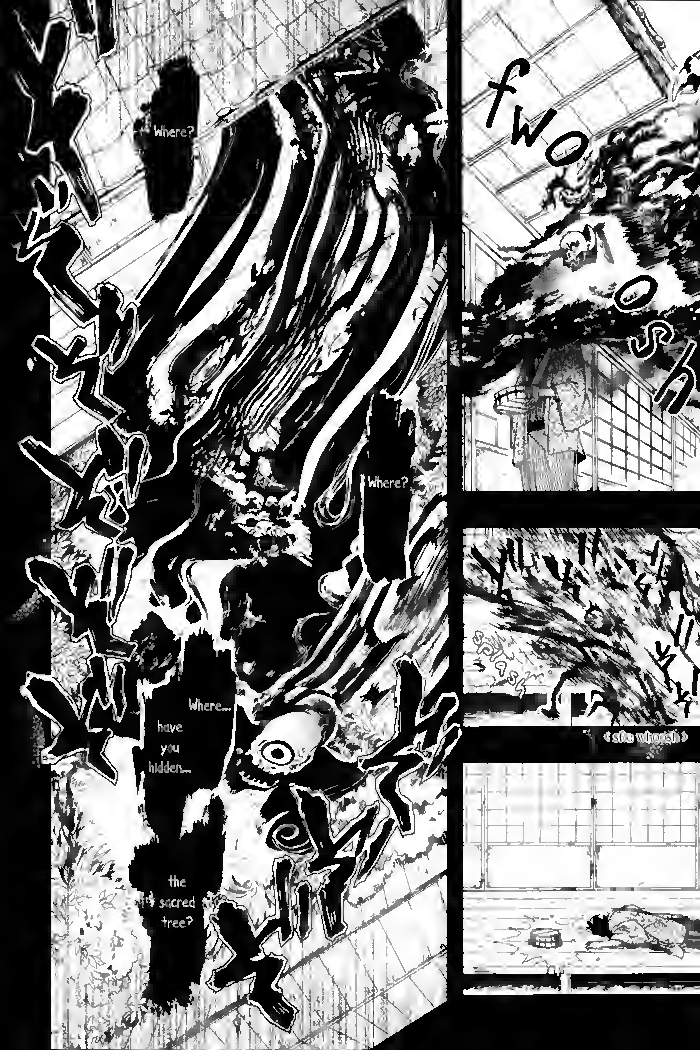

THE LADY FOX SEEMED ESPECIALLY PASSIONATE...
WELL, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THOSE DEMONS ARE OUT FOR REVENGE...

ANYBODY WHO STANDS AGAINST SHAMON-SAMA IS MY ENEMY.
I WISH THEY'D JUST LEAVE.
IF HUMANS ARE SUPERIOR,
WE CAN DRIVE OUT THE DEMONS BY FORCE.


HATRED IS HATRED
AN ENEMY IS AN ENEMY
KARMA MAKES NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN HUMAN AND DEMON

WE'RE EXORCISTS, ISN'T THAT WHAT WE DO?
KU-CHI-HA?
Destroy the enemies. Eat the humans.
If one reflects on past love,
One will be filled with sadness.

hiss
The dog has come from the Seal of Heaven, the evil-ks are torn asunder, and the holy tree is made a god.
Descends as a god.
The holy tree, sacrificed.
hiss
hiss
hiss
hiss
hiss
Soothe endlessly. Fulfill thy duty!
Save the fox which has hidden in the wood of a dead tree deep in the mountains.
My brethern.
Those within this sacred tree, find the enemy and swarm, swarm!
?
And it looks like they've brought friends!
!?
The demons?
Oh no. are they coming back!?
!!


Where?
Where?
Where...
have
you
hidden...
the
sacred
tree?
fwoosh
« she whirls »

HEY! HURRY UP WITH THE WATER!
YOU'RE SLOW AGAIN!
OPEN
!?
WHAT!?
WHAT HAP-PENED!?
HEY!!
GET UP!!
!
hi
Where are you hiding, Little rabbit?
Bow to the Lord of Heaven!
sfx shock

WH...
WHAT!?
WHAT DO YOU W NT...!?
NO
The fox's tree.
Where have you hidden it?
TREE-? WHAT-?
IN THAT
AH... ALL THE LUMBER IS STORED...
STORE-HOUSE OVER THERE
Tremble
Tremble
NO!
GAAHH!!
Over there!
Over there!
Hurry!
Hurry!
We have found it We will be rewarded.
whoosh
〈 sfx:fwoosh 〉

!!
IT'S COMING!
Surprise
Wah!?
CRASH
CRASH
Ahh!
CRASH
CRASH
CRASH
cough
cough
cough
cough
ARE THEY TRYING... TO BREAK DOWN THE DOOR!?
〈 sfx. slam 〉

GAH!
BUT
cough
LOOK!
cough
(RUMBLE
(RUMBLE
(RUMBLE
(RUMBLE
(RUMBLE
THE PEOPLE OUT IN THE STORE ARE IN DANGER!!
IF THEY CAN'T BREAK THROUGH... THEN THEY'RE NOT COMPLETELY MATERIALISED
< sfx crash >
whoosh
(RUMBLE
(RUMBLE
AND THEN I HEARD THAT HE HAD SUFFERED SERIOUS BURNS IN A STOREHOUSE WITH NO FIRE.
AND LATELY THE QUALITY OF CUSTOMERS THEY'VE BEEN ATTRACTING HASN'T BEEN SO GOOD SO I WAS WORRIED
I WAS A FRIEND OF THIS SHOP'S OWNER
AND CHARCOAL STORED IN A DRY ENVIRONMENT
OXYGEN
AND THEN I SAW IT.
NOBODY KNEW THE SOURCE OF THE FIRE SO I WAS SEARCHING AROUND
SO MUCH DUST...

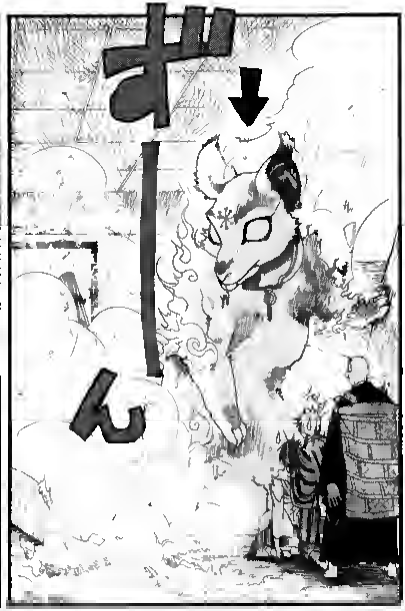
THIS WAS ALL PLANNED!!
NO WAY...!

(sfx: boom)
smoke
cough
UGH
cough
cough
smoke
smoke

Eeeeh!?
JM
SHOCK
JM
HUH?
THAT WAS LOUD...
cough
WHAT WAS THAT...?
MY EARS...
WHAT JUST HAP-PENED...?
ARE YOU KIDS OKAY...?
cough
HEY...
cough
cough

Are you unhurt?

H...
HELLO?
WHO ARE YOU...?


ガ
ん

(sfx: stare)

MY LITTLE MOUSIE WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
AH, WONDERFUL YOU'RE ALL IN ONE PIECE.

clatter
AHH, I CAME AS FAST AS I COULD. LOOKS LIKE I WAS RIGHT ON TIME.
IS EVERYONE ALIVE AND WELL?

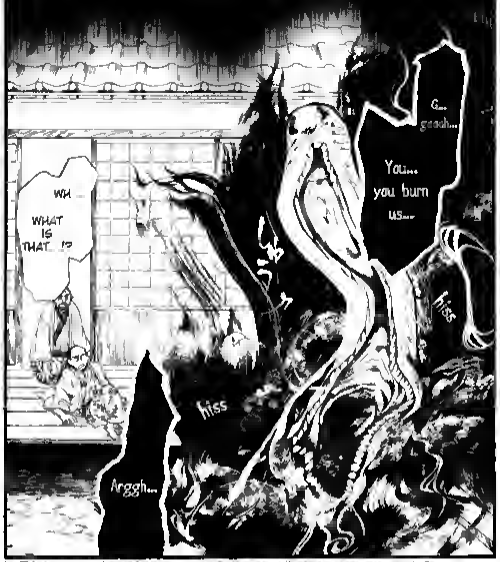
Kurotobi-san!!
blink

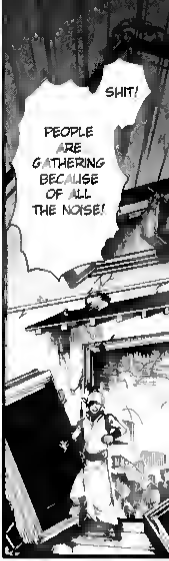
SURPRISED?
OH, YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW I GOT HERE? LUCKILY, I HAD A BIT OF HELP, SO IT TOOK NO TIME AT ALL.
WHAT IS THAT THING?
JUMP

DID TSURUUME-SAN COME TOO...?
WHEN YOU DIDN'T COME BACK, I JUST FOLLOWED THE TRAIL OF DEMONS.
Is there a costume party?
What's with the Sumo?

IT'S MY PET DEMON - A FIRE RAT, TO BE SPECIFIC
HE COMES RUNNING WHEN I CALL HIM ISN'T HE CUTE?
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD THE STORY? IN THE "TAKETORI MONOGATARI",
PRINCESS KAGUYA DEMANDS A COAT MADE FROM THE SKIN OF A FIRE RATE FROM HER SUITOR, MINISTER ABE
HHH
THANKS - I THINK ?
NO PROBLEM.
Hehe~
AHAHA, ACTUALLY, I'M NOT REALLY THAT STRONG
I JUST KNOW HOW TO HANDLE DEMONS
WAHHHHH!!!
Gasp
!!!
.....!

< T N This is from a very famous Japanese fairy tale >





< T N: This is true. A bag of wheat stored in the silo will absorb heat and catch fire.
And a cloud of flour dust is extremely flammable. Don't try this at home, kids. >

SO THE DEMONS WEREN'T INVOLVED AT ALL.
HOTCAKE MIX MADE WITH WHEAT FLOUR CAN SPONTA-NEOUSLY COMBUST...
Hot... cakes...? Is that like a hotcake?
HUH? IS THAT TRUE? THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW.

< T N: A hotcake : a spirit usually a saint or Buddha >

WHEN IT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU HEAR IN A NEWSCASTER'S REPORT, YOU START THINKING THAT "STUFF LIKE THAT ONLY HAPPENS ON TV."
YEAH, THERE WAS A SERIOUS ACCIDENT LIKE THAT LAST MONTH. IT WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS.
I DIDN'T THINK STUFF LIKE THAT COULD REALLY HAPPEN, THOUGH...
EVER SINCE I CAME HERE, THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF "STUFF" LIKE THAT.
OH...?
Do things like that really happen where he's from?
You...
Humans...
Jump

surprise
HOWEVER,
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? STAND DOWN!!
OH MY YOU'RE QUICK !
Shove
PLEASE WAIT...
IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO TALK TO THEM FOR A MOMENT
flash
YOU'RE...
RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENED IN NAITOU SHINJUKU AREN'T YOU?
YOU MUST HAVE OVERWHELMED THE CARPENTER, GENKICHI, AND KILLED HIM.
WHAT'S THAT I SMELL? YOU REEK OF DEMON-STINK.
But we will kill...
The enemies of our master.
We know not...
Thy names...
GLARE
GLARE
GLARE
GLARE
GLARE

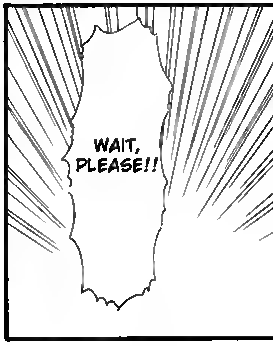
OUR PAIN IS WORTH THOUSANDS OF YOUR LIVES!!
The holy tree was revered.
But your kind cruelly cut it down.
He cut a hole in our master...
And he filled master's body... With poison.
THEIR MASTER... IS A TREE!?
SO THE NAKAMURA-YA SHOP BOUGHT THE LOG, AND THE CLERK FOUND THE DRUGS AND STARTED DEALING ON THE SIDE...?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE...!?
NO WAY... THAT LOG IS A SACRED TREE!? AND THE GUY WHO GOT KILLED WAS HIDING DRUGS INSIDE IT.
I'M THE CLERK MATAJI
COME THIS WAY

LISTEN!!
I MEAN
WE KNOW HE WAS UP TO NO GOOD, SO...
WHAT IF THEY WERE JUST TRYING TO STOP HIM FROM HURTING SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO THEM...!?
WHAT IF THEY DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL HIM?

I SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING
...IS THAT SO?

slice

DO YOU FEEL SYMPATHY FOR THEM? THAT'S ONE SIDE OF THE STORY, BUT NOT THE WHOLE STORY
...OH MY RIKUGOU-SAN IS TOO KIND


WAIT, PLEASE!!

...IF YOU LET YOURSELF BE SWAYED BY SYMPATHY, YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE THE TRUTH.
I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD THIS SORT OF STORY BEFORE
BUT HIS DAUGHTER WAS SICK WITH THE SAME ILLNESS THAT CLAIMED THE MOTHER
HE HAD A SWEET LITTLE DAUGHTER, AND SHE WAS HE ONLY THING HE HAD TO REMEMBER HIS BELOVED WIFE BY.
THE MAN THEY KILLED GENKICHI.
DESPERATELY NEEDED MONEY A LOT OF MONEY
SO THE FATHER STARTED SELLING ILLEGAL DRUGS
IT'S A FAMILIAR STORY
BUT THAT'S HOW LIFE IS
FULL OF HARDSHIP AND SADNESS FOR HUMANS AND DEMONS ALIKE
HOW CAN WE SAY WHOSE SUFFERING IS GREATER?
SO YOU HAVE TO LET REASON GUIDE YOUR SWORD...
AND THEN PEACE WILL REIGN

‹ sfx slam ›

...!!
HAHA! THAT WAS AN IMPRESSIVE ENTRANCE!
ARE YOU FROM THE SEAT OF HEAVEN?

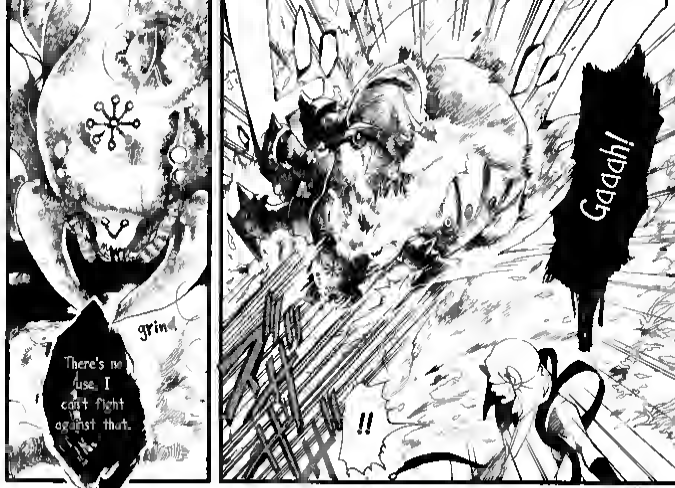
YOU AGAIN...
YOU TALK TOO MUCH...

I AGREE.

< sfx. whoosh >
whistle
< sfx. snap >
< sfx. GRRRRRRRR >
HMPH!
AS EXPECTED, YOUR TECHNIQUE IS PATHETIC!
jinsle

HOW MUCH LONGER IS THIS GOING TO GO ON!?
DAMN IT!
THERE'RE TOO MANY OF THEM!!
〈 sfx: slash 〉
I see.
You do as your master wishes.
That is most unusual for a Dog God.
You are the Dog God.
The natural power you possess is greater than any weapon, yet you do not use it.
If you used your fangs and claws, you'd be much stronger.

CALL ME THAT ONE MORE TIME...
AND I'LL KILL YOU.
Kuchi...
Sur...ee
Hurr...
COME BACK HERE AND HELP US!
HEY!
WHERE'S TOKI?
...HM?
FOR NOW, OUR JOB IS TO HELP PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY DEMONS
WE DON'T KILL
SHAMON-SAMA
AH!
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT


There's no use. I can't fight against that.
grin
Gaaah!
!!
< sfx: thump, skid >

AND I'M NO GOOD AT FIGHTING DIRECTLY.
TCH— AND BENI-CHAN ISN'T HERE...

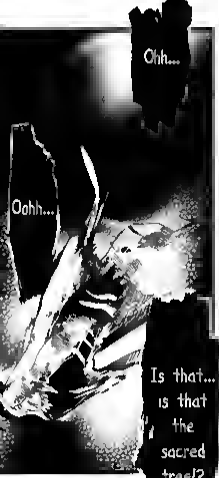
You Idiot! What are you doing!? Come back!
Shock
TOKI!!

A wood demon has more spiritual energy than a beast demon, but they are not naturally inclined to violence...
jingle
But they do have fangs, and I can be fearsome.

huff
huff
TH...
THIS
huff
IS WHAT YOU WANT, RIGHT?

dra a a a a g

huff
huff


Ohh...
Oohh...
Is that... is that the sacred tree!?

I am
We have found it!!
We have found it!

YOU CAN RETURN NOW!!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
cough
I CAN'T BREATHE...
Oooochhhh!!
Ahh, master...!! At last...!!

Until we have taken revenge for our master...
We will not withdraw!!
Do not toy with us!!

It hurts...
I don't want to disappear...
It hurts...
I don't want to die...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND COMPLICATED STUFF. I DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO ABOUT IT? BUT I DO KNOW ONE THING
!
AND THAT'S THAT I...
HATE BEING ALONE
WAIT...
HEY, I'M YOU...

SORRY IF I HIT YA!!
HEY!! KID!
<sfx: whoosh>
...Huh?

Amatsuki

By Takayama Shinobu

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Chapter 22: Occasionally to Wakubard

< sfx: fwoosh >

Chapter 22: Occasionally to Wakubara

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?
BONTEN...
HOW DO YOU ALWAYS GET YOURSELF WRAPPED UP IN THIS STUFF? DO YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH?
Oh!
Whoa!
OH!
oh!
Oh!
oh!
Creature of Heaven,
Why ally yourself with them?
Why?
Are those of Heaven's Seat not the defenders of humankind?
Why?
Why?
PERHAPS I AM MISTAKEN, BUT I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE YAKOU SEES ME AS AN OBSTACLE.
...HMPH. IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?

I'M AS MUCH AGAINST THE YAKOU AS I AM AGAINST THE PRINCESS
I'M HERE TO MAINTAIN THE PEACE ANYONE WHO DISRUPTS THAT IS MY ENEMY
AND YOU'VE GONE OUTSIDE THE YAKOU'S CONTROL.
TO YOU, HE IS JUST ANOTHER HUMAN CHILD.
BUT HE IS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO ME.
I WON'T ALLOW YOU TO TOUCH HIM.
IS THAT WHY YOU'VE COME HERE. WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS CHUNK OF WOOD?
jingle

TO YOU, IT'S JUST A LOWLY DEMON BUT I HAVE A SPECIAL CONNECTION TO IT.
AND IF YOU TOUCH IT, I'LL KILL YOU.

TSUYU-KUSA
YOU'RE AN IDIOT
WHY ARE YOU IN THAT UNSIGHTLY FORM?
ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL YOURSELF FOR THAT FOX?
SHUT UP
IF THAT BRAT IS SO IMPORTANT TO YOU, THEN TAKE HIM AND GO
IF HE KEEPS GETTING IN MY WAY...
leap
I'LL KILL HIM TOO!!
Gah...
jingle
flutter

HOW SHAMEFUL.
DON'T YOU GIVE ME ANY SHIT.
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR EXCUSES. YOU KNOW OUR RULE.

DON'T RAISE YOUR HAND AGAINST RON OVER SOMETHING SO FOOLISH!
Gahh, let me go!
HE'S BEEN TAINTED BY THE YAKOU, UTSUROSHI.

FORGIVEN AND FORGOTTEN
A DIFFERENCE IN OPINION CAN BE FORGIVEN

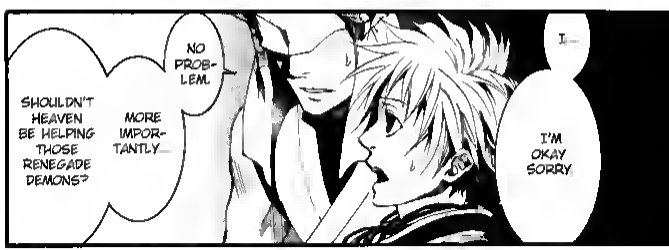
Eat him and the humans!
Eat him!
No - he's only an imposter!
Heaven has forsaken us!!

Oh!
Oh!
oh!
EAT HIM!
oh!
OH!
OH!
Let us meet at the sound of the Yakou's bell!
Eat him!
OOOHH!
oh!
Tear out his entrails, drain his blood!
< sfx roar >
grab
Wah!
WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT, DUMBASS!?
AH!
ROA
R
THEY'RE MELTING TOGE-THER—!?

sizzle

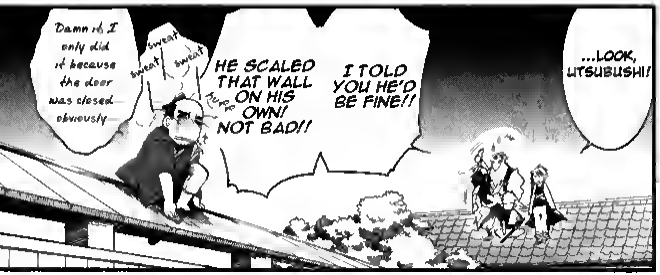
Uwaaaaah, Shinonome's cord got burnt
pat/
Pat
YEAH, AND YOU'D HAVE BEEN FRIED TOO. TRY TO STAY ALIVE, OKAY—?
Smoke
Smoke

CRA
SH
Uwaah!
RIKUGOU-SAN, ARE YOU INSANE!?


I—
I'M OKAY SORRY
NO PROB-LEM.
MORE IMPOR-TANTLY—
SHOULDN'T HEAVEN BE HELPING THOSE RENEGADE DEMONS?

Arghh... ooff!
sweat
Grrr...
sweat
Heihachi-san!?

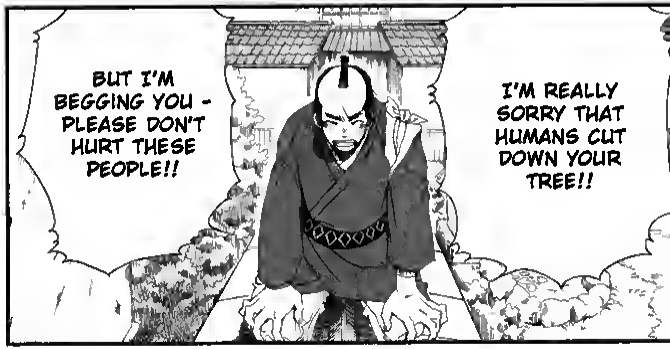
Oi! Wait for me, you guys!!


Damn it, I only did it because the door was closed... obviously
sweat
sweat
sweat
HE SCALED THAT WALL ON HIS OWN! NOT BAD!!
I TOLD YOU HE'D BE FINE!!
...LOOK, UTSUBUSHI!

HE CAME HERE TO STOP YOU FROM FIGHTING, SO JUST LISTEN.
HE'S GOT SOMETHING HE WANTS TO SAY TO YOU.

HEI-HACHI...!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?

.....
THANKS FOR HELPING ME ESCAPE BEFORE.
BUT I CAME BACK BECAUSE I HAD TO TELL YOU SOMETHING.
TSUYU-KUSA!

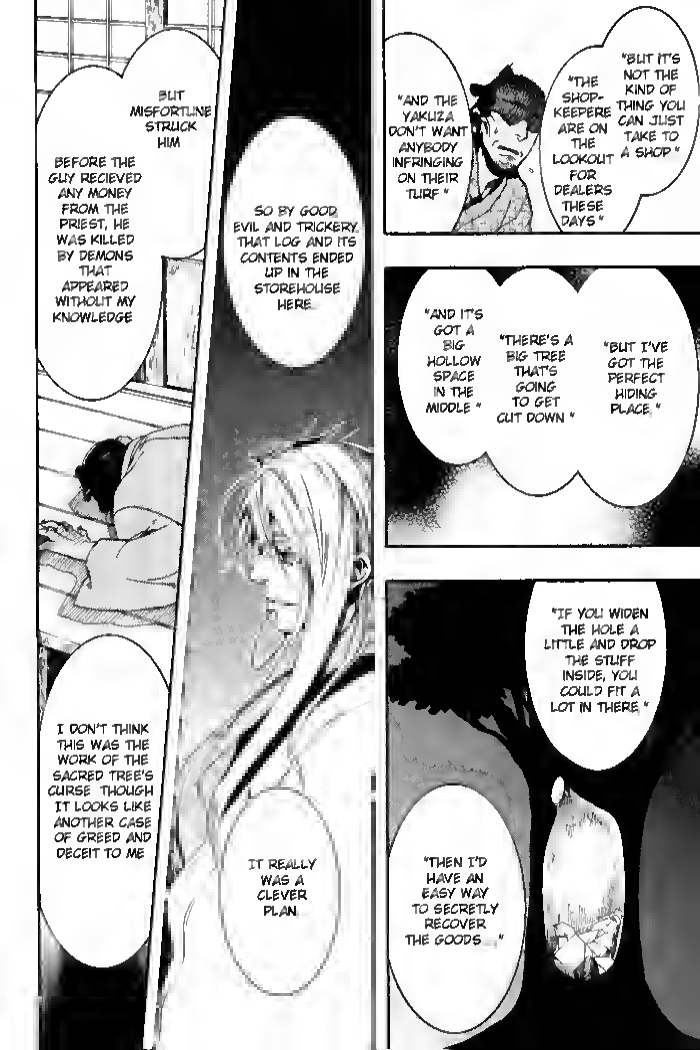

BUT I'M BEGGING YOU - PLEASE DON'T HURT THESE PEOPLE!!
I'M REALLY SORRY THAT HUMANS CUT DOWN YOUR TREE!!

I KNOW HE DIDN'T DO IT OUT OF SPITE!
I DON'T KNOW THE OWNER OF THIS STORE PERSONALLY, BUT I'VE HEARD HE'S A GOOD MAN!

PEOPLE WERE MOVING BACK TO AN ABANDONED VILLAGE, SO THEY DECIDED TO AUCTION SOME OF THE TREES TO LUMBER WHOLESALERS -- INCLUDING THE SACRED TREE
EVEN THIS ONE...?
IT'S A MAGNIFICENT OLD CAMPHOR TREE, BUT...
IT'S BEEN RAVAGED BY DISEASE AND THE TRUNK IS HOLLOW
HOLLOW? THEN IT WON'T BE ANY GOOD FOR CONSTRUCTION OR SHIPBUILDING
WELL, SINCE IT'S A CAMPHOR TREE, COULDN'T IT BE USED TO MAKE CAMPHOR OIL?
BUT ISN'T IT TOO BIG TO USE?
IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE'S BEEN USING IT AS A SHRINE TREE WE DON'T HAVE TO BOTHER WITH AN EXORCISM.
WHO WOULD PAY FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, ANYWAY?
AND IF WE CUT IT DOWN, THERE'S STILL THE PROBLEM OF TRANSPORTING IT. IT'S TOO BIG TO PULL.
glance
IF YOU'LL LEND A HAND I'D BE GLAD TO TAKE IT
FORGIVE ME, SIR, BUT THAT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A GOOD IDEA.
YOUR BUSINESS TRADES MOSTLY IN BAMBOO.
NAKA-MURAYA-SAN!?

NEVER MIND THAT - YOU SAY THIS TREE IS HOLLOW INSIDE?
PERHAPS I WOULD HAVE A USE FOR IT IN MY BUSINESS
AFTER ALL, AMPHOR EXTRACT IS FOUND THROUGHOUT THE TREE
IT'S QUITE VALUABLE, ISN'T IT?
UNUSUAL AS IT IS, THOUGH, THIS IS A SACRED TREE.
CUTTING IT DOWN COULD BRING BAD LUCK
IS IT REALLY APPROPRIATE TO JUST CUT IT DOWN AS YOU SAY?
THERE MUST BE A BETTER WAY TO REPAY THE TREE THAT'S WATCHED OVER YOUR VILLAGE FOR SO MANY YEARS
WHAT A KIND-HEARTED MAN!
HE'S WILLING TO TAKE A LOSS
MAYBE WE SHOULD LEAVE THE MATTER TO HIM
mumble
mumble
mumble
BUT NO ONE COMES ALL THE WAY HERE TO PRAY HERE ANYMORE, DO THEY?
HE'S REALLY A GOOD GUY.
mumble
mumble
I WAS JUST AN ONLOOKER, BUT THAT'S THE IMPRESSION I GOT.

ON THAT NIGHT, A MAN CAME SECRETLY TO VISIT THE CARPENTER.
"YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THE DRUGS, GENKICHI?"
"YES, SIR."
"THE MAN WHO LIVES NEXT DOOR IS A DOCTOR."
"I HAD BROUGHT MY DAUGHTER THERE FOR AN EXAMINATION AND I HAPPENED TO OVERHEAR HIM TALKING."
APPARENTLY THE DOCTOR USES IT AS AN ANESTHETIC WHEN HE'S STITCHING SWORD WOUNDS.
"IT WORKS JUST LIKE ILLEGAL OPIUM."
"...I SEE. THEN YOU MUST STEAL IT, GENKICHI."
"I'LL PAY YOU TWICE THE ASKING PRICE IF YOU CAN GET IT."
I'LL TAKE OVER FROM HERE.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE STRUGGLE, WE CANNOT ESCAPE HEAVEN'S NET...


"BUT IT'S NOT THE KIND OF THING YOU CAN JUST TAKE TO A SHOP."
"THE SHOPKEEPERE ARE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DEALERS THESE DAYS."
"AND THE YAKUZA DON'T WANT ANYBODY INFRINGING ON THEIR TURF."
"BUT I'VE GOT THE PERFECT HIDING PLACE."
"THERE'S A BIG TREE THAT'S GOING TO GET CUT DOWN."
"AND IT'S GOT A BIG HOLLOW SPACE IN THE MIDDLE."
"IF YOU WIDEN THE HOLE A LITTLE AND DROP THE STUFF INSIDE, YOU COULD FIT A LOT IN THERE."
"THEN I'D HAVE AN EASY WAY TO SECRETLY RECOVER THE GOODS..."
BUT MISFORTUNE STRUCK HIM
BEFORE THE GUY RECIEVED ANY MONEY FROM THE PRIEST, HE WAS KILLED BY DEMONS THAT APPEARED WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE
SO BY GOOD, EVIL AND TRICKERY, THAT LOG AND ITS CONTENTS ENDED UP IN THE STOREHOUSE HERE.
I DON'T THINK THIS WAS THE WORK OF THE SACRED TREE'S CURSE THOUGH IT LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER CASE OF GREED AND DECEIT TO ME
IT REALLY WAS A CLEVER PLAN.

OH YEAH, WHAT ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS FIRE?
CURSE OR NOT, THAT'S SOME WEIRD SHIT.
HE'S NOT A BAD PERSON!
BUT NAKAMURAYA-SAN WAS HURT - WASN'T THAT BECAUSE OF THE CURSE!?
YOU'RE WRONG
OH?
TSUYU-KUSA?
YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU?

IN SHORT, THERE IS NO CURSE
YOU'VE JUST BEEN SUCKED INTO THAT FOX'S PERSONAL VENDETTA
.....
Don't believe his lies...
I speak the truth!!
He's lying to you!
The burns the owner of this shop suffered are proof of my master's grudge!
THE WOOD SPIRIT WAS PURIFIED FROM THE TREE
AFTER THE BRANCHES WERE STRUCK FROM IT, A CEREMONY WAS HELD AN EXORCISM RITE
ANY LINGERING GRUDGE OR CURSE WENT TO HEAVEN WITH THE SPIRIT

MAYBE...
RIKU-GOU'S IDEA...
shove
AND...
THERE'S NO WAY...
AH, THAT EXPLAINS WHY THE STOREHOUSE WAS CLEARED OF SPIRITS
THE SACRED TREE WAS SO PURE THAT ANY EVIL SPIRITS STAYED AWAY

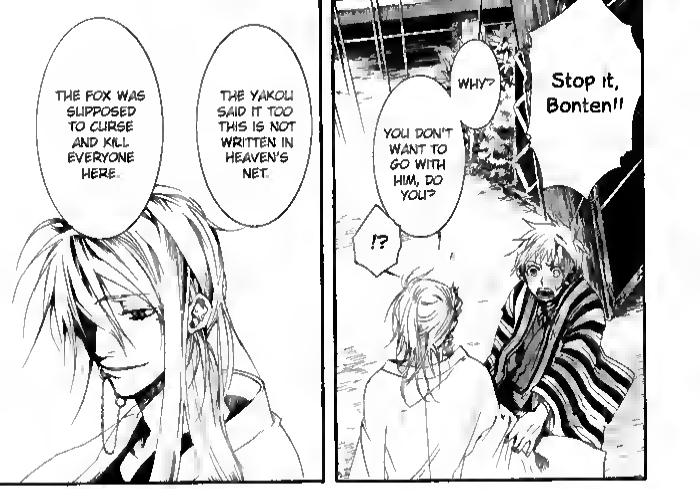
THE STORE OWNER SUSPECTED THAT ONE OF THE CLERKS WAS UP TO NO GOOD, AND BY CHANCE HE DISCOVERED THE POWDER IN THE STORE-HOUSE
HE WAS FLUSTERED, AND TRIED TO REMOVE THE POWDER FROM THE TREE
THE POWDER FLYING IN THE AIR FELL INTO THE LANTERN AT HIS FEET
IT HIT THE FLAME AND IGNITED
HIS KIMONO CAUGHT FIRE, AND THE CAMPHOR LOG WAS SET ABLAZE
IN A CHAIN REACTION THE FIRE SURROUNDED THE SHOPKEEPER AS THE OPIUM DUST BURNED

IF YOU WANNA CALL THAT DIVINE PUNISHMENT, WHATEVER
RIGHT, TSUYU-KUSA?
ARE YOU JUST GOING TO LET YOURSELF BE USED LIKE THIS?
SHUT UP!! WHAT DO YOU KNOW!? YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO GIVE ME ORDERS!!
WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO IS HELP THAT POOR FOX THAT'S BEING MANIPULATED BY THE YAKOU...
AND RETURN HER TO HER ORIGINAL STATE
Hey!
Why does everybody think I'm an asshole?
GON!!
MAYBE BECAUSE YOU LEAVE OTHER PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH YOUR PROBLEMS!!
TCH!
YOU REALLY WERE GOING TO LEAVE, WEREN'T YOU!?
I'M STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW THAT MAN MANAGED TO SURVIVE!
AND EVERYBODY JUST PILED ONTO ME - YOU COULD THINK OF MY FEELINGS SOMETIMES!

TSUYU-KUSA!
PLEASE, STOP!!
YOU'RE ONLY MAKING THINGS WORSE FOR YOURSELF AND THE FOX!!
HUMAN OR DEMON, EVERYBODY FEELS THE SAME PAIN WHEN SOMEONE DIES! I'M SORRY I CAN'T FIX IT!!
PLEASE!! YOU HAVE TO HELP HER!
YOU HAVE TO SAVE THE FOX!!
...BUT I HATE HUMANS.
YOU DON'T KNOW THE PEOPLE I'VE LOST.
BUT YOU'RE STILL CRYING FOR THEM.

Is this the place?
ring
HUH? WHAT'S THIS RINGING SOUND...?
ring
IT'S OBVIOUS!
THEY'RE COMING!!
ring
GRRR!
ring
Oooo!
ring
Waaah!
ring
Ooooo!
Ooooo!
Ooooo!
...THE YAKOU.
HERE TO PICK UP YOUR TRASH, I GUESS
ring
That is not why I have come. I have found the one who can defy Heaven's Net.
ring
So I must have him before I can destroy Heaven.

He is the key to the answer I seek.
...!!
Yakou...!! Finally, I've found...
shove
Unf!
He guard
IF YOU TAKE HIM, HE'LL LOSE HIS SOUL AND WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO BE REBORN
HA! YOU SAY SO INNOCENTLY
I GUESS YOU TOOK A BREAK FROM YOUR EXPERIMENTS TO PUT IN A PERSONAL APPEARANCE
It would be a pity to lose him now.
How could I not? They stand out too much. They incur Heaven's wrath.
I came to lead them to paradise.
He is the one.
He is the key I need.
gasp


THE FOX WAS SUPPOSED TO CURSE AND KILL EVERYONE HERE.
THE YAKOU SAID IT TOO THIS IS NOT WRITTEN IN HEAVEN'S NET.
Stop it, Bonten!!
WHY?
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO WITH HIM, DO YOU?
!?

IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU YOU WANTED THIS
THE YAKOU IS HERE WHEN HE SHOULDN'T BE HERE
I'M HERE WHEN I SHOULDN'T BE INVOLVED
SOMETHING'S HERE THAT SHOULDN'T BE HERE

TOKI, IT'S DANGEROUS!! GET OUT OF THERE!!
I didn't do anything!
RIKU-GOU-SAN!?
shock
ARE YOU SATISFIED?

THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO!!
YOU'LL KILL YOURSELF!!
ARE YOU CRAZY!?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? YOU'LL GET SUCKED IN!!
DAMN IT, LET ME GO, HEIHACHI!!
Ohhhhh...
BE QUIET!!

whoo & h
I curse you!
Hateful creature
Detestable creature
I curse you!
〈 sfx: hiss 〉
NO ONE CAN SAVE ME...
I'm scared.
I'm scared...
I'm scared...
I'm scared...
IS THIS WHAT I WANTED...?

NO!
crash
CRA
SH

< sfx: fwoosh >

TOKI!!
ARE YOU ALRIGHT!?
HE MADE IT
huff
huff
huff
huff

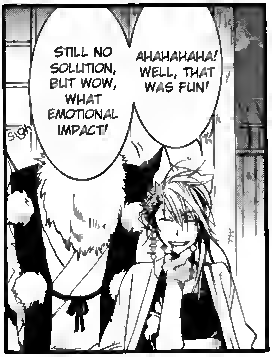
HE'LL BE FINE HE'S JUST FAINTED.
HE'S STILL BREATHING.
OH I SEE
gasp

twitch
THIS FOX...

Silence

IMAYOU, IS THAT YOU?
bark
bark bark
.....

SON IS THIS ALRIGHT?
O

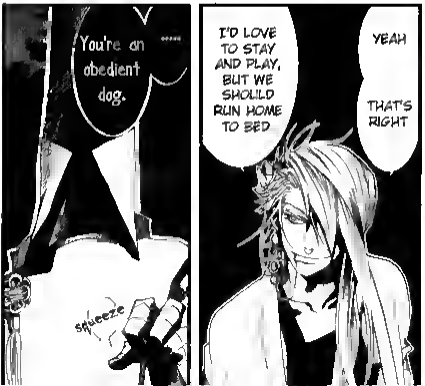

AHAHAHAHA! WELL, THAT WAS FUN!
STILL NO SOLUTION, BUT WOW, WHAT EMOTIONAL IMPACT!

I AGREE WITH YOU.
...HEH.
UTSUBUSHI!

INVOLVING THIS MANY PEOPLE. I MEAN.
IS THIS REALLY WHAT OUR MASTER WOULD WANT?

Orders from above?
.....

YAKOU
TOO BAD, BUT YOU'RE NOT GETTING YOUR PRECIOUS RESEARCH SUBJECT.


You're an obedient dog.
.....
squeeze
I'D LOVE TO STAY AND PLAY, BUT WE SHOULD RUN HOME TO BED.
YEAH
THAT'S RIGHT.

UTSUBUSHI

hiss

TAKE CARE OF HIM
I THINK THAT'S IT FOR TODAY'S ENTERTAINMENT
UNTIL THESE FOOLS TAKE TO THE STAGE ONCE MORE

TSUYU-KUSA!?
HEY!

THIS WAS JUST A REHEARSAL...
THE ACTORS ARE ALL ASSEMBLED

AH, I GUESS WE SHOULD LET HIM REST...

WILL IT BE A COMEDY OR A TRAGEDY?
WHO KNOWS? BUT THE KEY...
WILL BE THE "UNWRITTEN PAGE."
blink

Amatsuki

By Takayama Shinobu

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WELL, I ADMIT I HAD A HARD TIME BELIEVING THE CAUSE WAS SUPER-NATURAL...
WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT WAS...
BUT NOW THAT I THINK BACK ON THAT CLERK'S ACTIONS... IT ALL MAKES SENSE.
IS THIS TRUE...?
Chapter 23: A Cold Mountain Wind Through a Bamboo Fence
mutter
mutter
mutter
AND WHAT OF THAT POOR MAN, IS HE STILL IN BED?
YES SIR, IT'S TRUE... I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES...
YES, AND I'M AFRAID HE MIGHT NOT LAST...
mutter
mutter
BUT HIS LIFE IS IN GOD'S HANDS
THE PRIEST HERE WILL PRAY FOR HIS SOUL...

I'M SURE THIS HAS ALL BEEN HARD ON YOU.
SO IF ANYONE WISHES TO QUIT, THERE WILL BE NO HARD FEELINGS.
THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN MAKING MONEY.
B...
BUT SIR, WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY...!
I'M SURE I COULD ARRANGE FOR YOU TO WORK AT NEARBY SHOPS.
IF IT BECOMES KNOWN THAT THIS SHOP WAS DEALING IN ILLEGAL DRUGS, THERE COULD BE PENALTIES FOR ALL INVOLVED
I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE CAUGHT UP IN THAT.
RUMORS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT WILL SPREAD.
AND WE'LL HAVE A HARD TIME KEEPING OUR CUSTOMERS.
THE FAULT ISN'T ONLY WITH BANTOU-!!
IT'S WITH ME AS WELL, BECAUSE I DIDN'T STOP HIM

PERHAPS THIS IS THE END FOR ME
GRAB
THE TRUTH IS THAT MATAJI WAS THE ONE WHO KEPT THIS SHOP RUNNING...
HOW MANY LIVES WERE RUINED?

< T/N: A ryou is a unit of money roughly equivalent to one 'koku' of rice, which is the amount of rice needed to feed one person for a year. In modern US dollars, it's about $250-$300 - about a week's salary for a laborer. >

IF HE SOLD A BAG OF OPIUM TO ONE MAN HE'D MAKE ONE RYOU IF HE SOLD TWO BAGS TO TWO MEN, THAT'S TWO RYOU
AND AS PROFITS GREW, SO DID THE RISK.
IT BECAME HARDER AND HARDER TO DISTINGUISH ONE CUSTOMER FROM ANOTHER.
GRADUALLY HE FORGOT WHY HE WAS DOING IT.

Chapter 23
A Cold Mountain Wind Through a Bamboo Fence

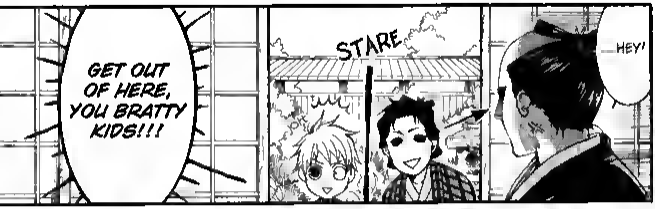
HM?
...OH, SORRY, WAS SOMEONE THERE?
IT'S THAT POLICEMAN FROM BEFORE!
Ah..
SLAM!
EXCUSE ME!!
Wah!
Ya
ma
u
chi
sa
ma
♡
tap
YOU!!!
YOU'RE THAT LAZY GOOD-FOR-NOTHING'S FRIEND!!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!!? WHAT BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE HERE!?
YAMA-UCHI-DONO!! CALM DOWN!
QUIET DOWN, THERE'S A SICK MAN HERE!
yell
SHOCK
GOOD-FOR-NOTHING?

Ha-ha-ha-ha!
Uwaah, what a silly face~ ♡
Poke
I'M ONLY HERE TO DELIVER A GET WELL PRESENT. ♡

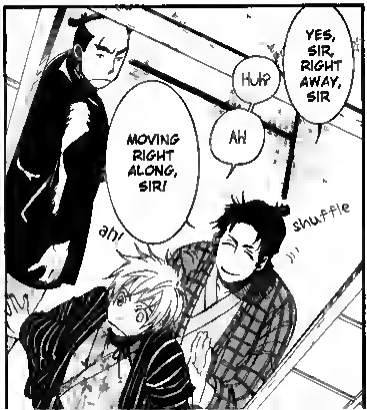
IS STALKING ME A PART OF YOUR OFFICIAL DUTIES?
HOW DID YOU KNOW I WAS HERE?
WAAH, WAAH!! BOSS!! GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF!!
That boy from the 2F medicine shop?
Oooh, scary~
When did he get here?
I'm going to kill him.
I'm going to kill him, I'm going to kill him.

HE QUIT...?
whisper
Shhh
More like an early retire-ment~
...Ah...
THAT MATAJI GUY IS SUSPICIOUS
HE'LL PROBABLY GET REPORTED SOON
A WORKER HERE HAS LEFT, AND THAT DOES RELATE TO OUR INVESTI-GATIONS!
WE'RE NOT HERE TO MAKE A SOCIAL CALL!!
Tch
BUT THE MATAJI THAT WORKS HERE HAS A GOOD REPUTATION

Ahem...
AH... I SEE, BUT THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THOSE BOYS
IF THERE ARE RUMORS ABOUT TOWN, THEN CERTAINLY YOU SHOULD JUST TALK TO THE SHOP OWNER INVOLVED


GET OUT OF HERE, YOU BRATTY KIDS!!!
STARE
HEY!

SIR, PLEASE CONTROL YOURSELF!!
KU RO TO BI!!! I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!!!
Tch
ASSHOLE
CRASH


YES, SIR, RIGHT AWAY, SIR
HUH?
AH
MOVING RIGHT ALONG, SIR!
shuffle

YOU DIDN'T THINK LAST NIGHT WAS THE FIRST WE'D HEARD OF THIS ISSUE, DID YOU?
HUH?
IT'S A GOOD THING I WROTE THAT LETTER TO SASAKI-SAN.

YES, AND KNOWING WHAT AN UPTIGHT, CRITICAL MAN YAMAUCHI-SAN IS, WE FELT CONFIDENT THAT HE WOULD NOTICE ANY INCONSISTENCIES.
SO SASAKI-SAN WAS THE ONE WHO TOLD THEM THAT A WORKER HERE HAD "RETIRED"

AND OF COURSE WE SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED OFFICERS THAT HAD NO PRIOR "BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP" WITH THAT CLERK
WE KNEW SOMETHING STRANGE WAS GOING ON IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, SO WE THOUGHT IT BEST TO ALERT THE POLICE

SO IT'S "CASE CLOSED."
AND BY NOW NAKAMURA-YA WILL BE CONFESSING HIS SUSPICIONS THAT A WORKER WAS INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES
HE MADE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MURDER IN NAITOU SHINJUKU AND TURF WARS AMONG THE CRIMINAL SYNDICATES

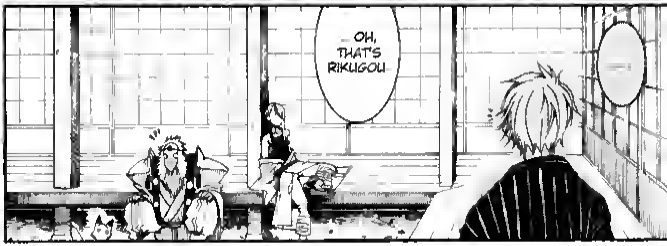
AND THE STORY ISN'T QUITE WRAPPED UP YET ON THEIR SIDE, IS IT ..?
YOU'RE ON RATHER FRIENDLY TERMS WITH THE HEAVENLY SEAT, AREN'T YOU, RIKUGOU-SAN?
WELL...
I DO STILL HAVE SOME QUESTIONS.
...PLEASE, THAT'S ENOUGH. ONE OF THEIR KIND... HAS BEEN SORT OF NICE TO ME...
AND THEN...
THEY'RE SEARCHING FOR HIM... I WONDER IF THEY'VE MANAGED TO ARREST HIM?
WELL NOW, YAMAUCHI-SAN MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT A MAN WITH TATTOOS ON HIS LEFT ARM... AND HE'S A FRIEND OF THE DEMONS
We're not friends!

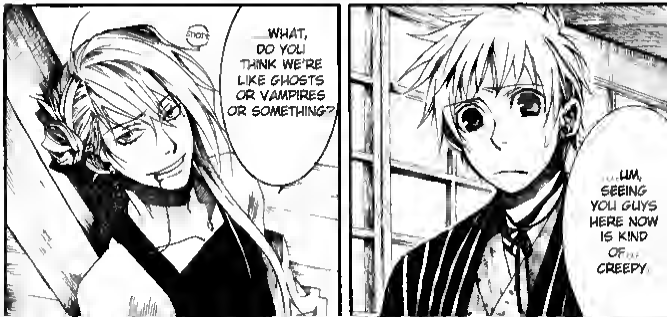
RIKU-GOU-SAN...
NOW THAT I'VE SEEN YOUR POWER IN ACTION, I FEEL I CAN SAY THIS...
DID YOU KNOW THAT EVER SINCE YOU CAME TO THIS WORLD...
WE'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU VERY CLOSELY?

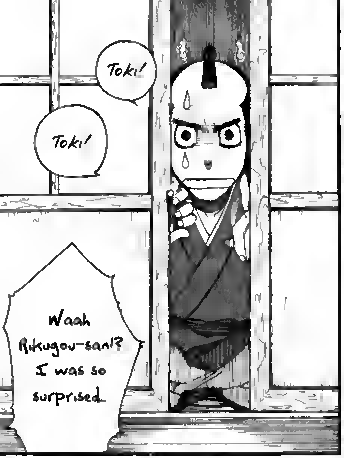
YOUR ABILITIES ARE DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE...
BUT THIS MUCH I KNOW
YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER
AND YOU'RE TOO VALUABLE TO WASTE

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU COULD CHANGE THE HATRED BETWEEN HUMANS AND DEMONS
BUT SOMETHING HAS TO CHANGE
OR NEXT TIME, YOU WON'T JUST BE INJURED.
THEY'LL KILL YOU.
OH, I SHOULDN'T BE SO DREARY LET'S HEAD BACK
I JUST HAVE A NATURALLY CONTRARY PERSONALITY
I HOPE I HAVEN'T LEFT YOU WITH AN UNPLEASANT AFTERTASTE?

IS THAT YOUR TRUE FORM?
YOU DON'T LOOK IT, BUT YOU'RE UNUSUALLY STRONG.
HMPH.


...OH, THAT'S RIKUGOU.


...WHAT, DO YOU THINK WE'RE LIKE GHOSTS OR VAMPIRES OR SOMETHING?
...UM, SEEING YOU GUYS HERE NOW IS KIND OF... CREEPY.


Toki!
Toki!
Waah Rikugou-san!? I was so surprised...

BUT PERSONALLY, I'D LIKE TO GET THE HELL OUT OF THIS PLACE, TOO
THAT ANNOYINGLY PERSISTANT GUY IS OVER THERE

YOU'VE GOT BALLS!
HEY, KIDDO!!
HUH!?

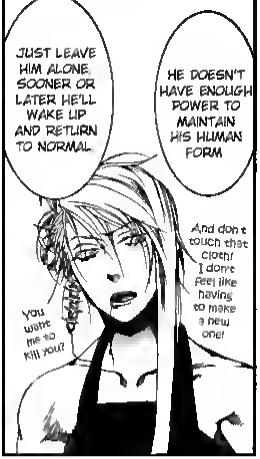
< sfx: grab >

DON'T BE SHOCKED, OKAY?
finger
OKAY
SCOOT !!
SCOOT
crawl

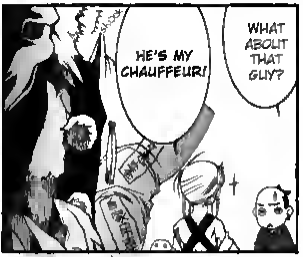
Oh thank goodness you're alright!
Come here!!
patter
grab
grab
HUH?
WHAT IS IT?

shock
rustle
GAH!
What is that thing!?
THAT'S TSUYU-KUSA.
SKOMP
cough
sniff
WERE YOU LISTENING? DON'T YELL!
AHH!!! TOK!!

Aren't you friends!?
WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT THAT IDIOT'S CONDITION!?
I was just making sure he was alright!!!
HA!
ME, FRIENDS WITH THESE GULLIBLE MORONS!? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!!
yell

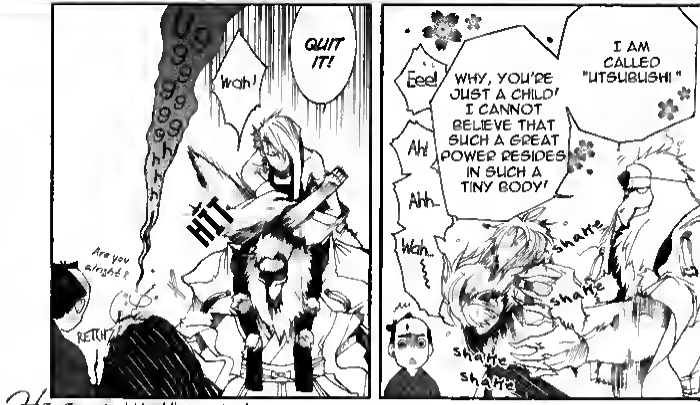

JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE. SOONER OR LATER HE'LL WAKE UP AND RETURN TO NORMAL.
HE DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO MAINTAIN HIS HUMAN FORM
You want me to kill you?
And don't touch that cloth! I don't feel like having to make a new one!

running


HE'S MY CHAUFFEUR!
WHAT ABOUT THAT GUY?

HMM
I SEE YOU RECOGNISE THE HUMAN THAT SAVED YOUR LIFE.
HOH
IMAYOU!!

< sfx: shock >

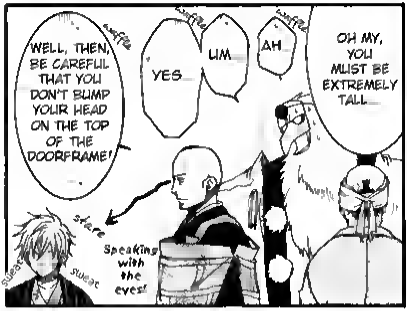


Hana mi, http://hana-mi.net
http://mutsuki_mangalivejournal.com/

THAT'S COMMON KNOWLEDGE IN THIS WORLD.
...A HAKUTAKU IS A HEAVENLY BEAST THAT CAN TAKE HUMAN FORM.
WHAT'S A HAKU-TAKU...?
OH...
YOU'RE JUST PIKUBOU...
Don't you trust me?
Oh?
Sleep little baby, everything's gonna be okay
RON DIDN'T OVER-ESTIMATE YOU.
WELL, YOU'RE NO HAKUTAKU, BUT YOU'RE NOT BAD.
Isn't that cowardly!?
hmph!
It is, isn't it?
UNTIL MY TRUE POWER IS RESTORED, I HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.
AND YOU'RE JUST SOOOO GOOD AT DOING MY DIRTY WORK
WELL, I SUPPOSE I STILL HAVE A USE FOR YOU, UTSUBUSHI.
You're a bastard.

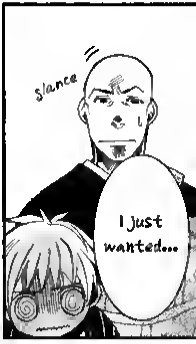
OH, CALM DOWN!! HE CAN'T SEE YOU!
Wuh...
Ahh...
EE!
EEHH!
MAY I HAVE A WORD...?
I HAD HEARD THERE WERE FRIENDS OF SHAMON-DONO HERE...
HM?

AM I INTERRUPTING?
blink
SURPRISE


WELL, THEN, BE CAREFUL THAT YOU DON'T BUMP YOUR HEAD ON THE TOP OF THE DOORFRAME!
scuffle
YES...
UM...
AH...
OH MY, YOU MUST BE EXTREMELY TALL...
stare
sweat
Speaking with the eyes!

OH NO...
THERE'S NO NEED TO THANK US!
...Toki.
NOT SAYING A WORD

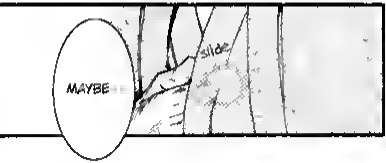
TO OFFER MY THANKS TO YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP
ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT, THIS IS WEIRD
wave wave
Wh wh... what?
Where are you looking at?
flap
flap


slance
I just wanted...

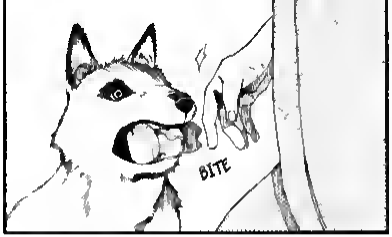
Oh, sorry!
Come here Imayou!!
HMM?
huh

sniff sniff
bark bark

Come on, Imayou! Don't bother him!
.....


MAYBE
slide

HAHAHA IS THAT A PUPPY?
I'M SORRY, I DON'T HAVE ANY TREATS



< T/N: There's a famous shrine to Inari that's actually inside a giant living camphor tree. >

I SUPPOSE I WAS SIMPLY BEING WHIMSICAL
AND CAMPHOR MADE ME THINK OF INARI, SO THAT'S WHY I MADE IT INTO A FOX.
I CARVED IT FROM A PIECE OF THAT CAMPHOR LOG BECAUSE THE WOOD SMELLS SO NICE
WOOD CARVING IS A LITTLE HOBBY OF MINE

...I WAS COVERED IN FLAMES...
I THOUGHT I'D DIE THERE IN THE STOREHOUSE...
BUT IN MY HEAD, I COULD HEAR A VOICE AS COOL AND QUENCHING AS COLD WATER...
This way!!
I'M ALWAYS CAREFUL TO CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND
AND SUDDENLY I COULD FEEL THE WIND AT MY BACK
BUT I WAS ABLE TO STUMBLE THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR AND INTO THE GARDEN!

BUT IT SEEMED THAT ONLY THE LOG WAS BURNING.
ONE WOULD EXPECT THAT THE FIRE WOULD CONSUME THE WHOLE STOREHOUSE...
SO I'M THANKFUL...
THAT THE TREE BURNED IN MY PLACE
I HAVE TO BELIEVE THAT.
HE REALLY
DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.

BUT WHO KNOWS
IT WAS ALL UNLUCKY COINCIDENCE
Imayou..?
Where did you go..?
BUT I GUESS IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE
Thank you
WHEN THINGS ARE THAT BAD...
MAYBE BELIEVING IS ALL THAT YOU CAN DO
Mark

AND MAYBE FATE...
CAN GIVE SOMEONE STRENGTH...
OR MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A DREAM.

BUT THAT'S THE KIND OF
DREAM I WANT TO FOLLOW

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http://hanasaku.livejournal.com/

HAVE I BEEN ASLEEP?
SHIT!
SURPRISE
WHAT DID THAT GUY DO TO ME!?
SLEEP WELL...
Mother has left us, let us call her with a song.
Father has left us, let us call to him with a trill of the flute.
Spirits of the east,
Spirits of the south,
Spirits of the west.
Spirits of the north,

HUH?
WHY-
DOES MY BODY FEEL HEAVY...?
< sfx shock >
WHAT
WHAT IS THAT BASTARD DOING ?
Please forgive me
I cannot meet your gaze
Lalala... toorotoorotoo...
Return to the center,
Return to your creator

SHOCK
Mother has returned to the mountain.
And, the child is left alone
Father has returned to the mountain
HE MUST BE OUTSIDE!
Poor, poor child...
Poor child, child of man, child of the gods.
What...?

< sfx: whoosh >

Blow hard, little one, for heaven is not so far from earth
This is like something from a dream... a beautiful dream.
toorotoorotoo...
It is a great honor to meet you,
Teten
Blow your flute, so Mother and Father will hear

Amatsuki

By Takayama Shinobu

V.4
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cleaning: [illegible]
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ISBN: 7-80[illegible]5213-[illegible]

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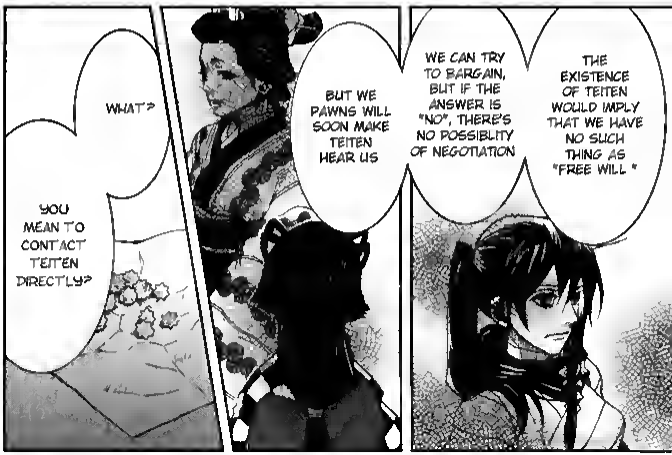
Chapter 24. Crimson Yuzuriha
What the hell...
Is that guy doing...!?

Chapter 24
Crimson Yuzuriha

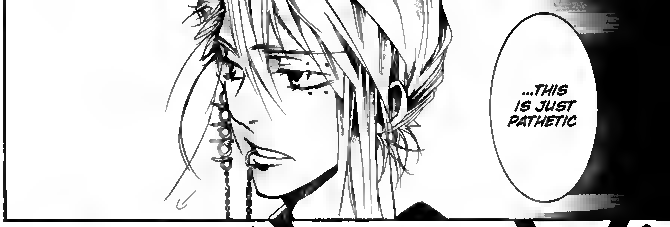
< T/N for previous page: Yuzuriha is kind of plant with white flowers. >

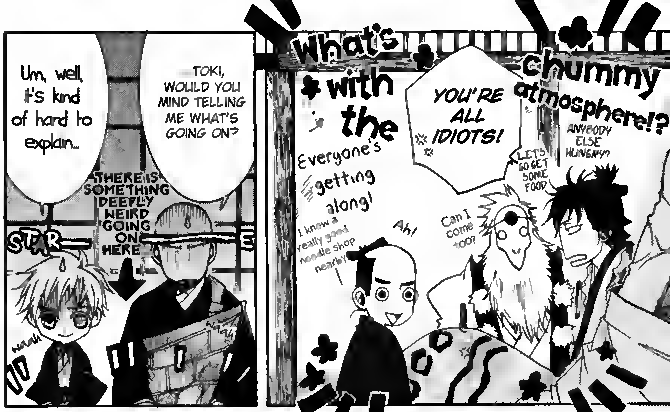
HEAVEN CAST'S A WIDE NET... AND ALL MEN ARE TANGLED IN IT...
SPLASH
MY FATE, AND THE FATE OF OUR GOVERNMENT, HAVE ALREADY BEEN DECIDED BY HEAVEN AND ARE BEYOND MY REACH.
SURELY THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS WORLD THAT CAN DEFY HEAVEN'S NET...
WELL SASAKI, YOU'VE ALREADY EXCEEDED THE THREE DAYS I PROMISED
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SHOW FOR IT?
YES, SIR.

...I LEAVE IT TO YOU.
PREPARATIONS ARE NEARLY COMPLETE...
WHILE THE EMPEROR COWERS IN FEAR, RIGHT, SASUKI?
AND THE SHOUGUN ENTRUSTS HEAVEN WITH THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY.
THE IMPERIAL COURT LOUDLY SINGS THE PRAISES OF TEITEN AND THE ANCESTRAL ANGELS.


WHAT?
YOU MEAN TO CONTACT TEITEN DIRECTLY?
BUT WE PAWNS WILL SOON MAKE TEITEN HEAR US
WE CAN TRY TO BARGAIN, BUT IF THE ANSWER IS "NO", THERE'S NO POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATION
THE EXISTENCE OF TEITEN WOULD IMPLY THAT WE HAVE NO SUCH THING AS "FREE WILL"

I THANK YOU FOR WATCHING OVER THAT CURSED ONE FOR ALL THESE YEARS.
PLEASE DON'T WORRY, YOUR HIGHNESS.
splash
REST ASSURED, SIR, YOUR SISTER WILL BE WELL PROTECTED.
...IS THAT SO?
THE RITUAL MAY ALREADY BE UNDERWAY AS WE SPEAK.
HMM
THAT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE.




Um, well, it's kind of hard to explain...
TOKI, WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT'S GOING ON?
THERE IS SOMETHING DEEPLY WEIRD GOING ON HERE
STAR
What's with the chummy atmosphere!?
YOU'RE ALL IDIOTS!
Everyone's getting along!
I know a really good noodle shop nearby!
Ah!
Can I come too?
LET'S GO GET SOME FOOD
ANYBODY ELSE HUNGRY?

YOU'RE NOT MAD, ARE YOU?
YOU SAID ONCE THAT JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE IS A DEMON, THAT DOESN'T MAKE THEM A BAD PERSON
YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE ABOUT KUCHIHA, RIGHT?

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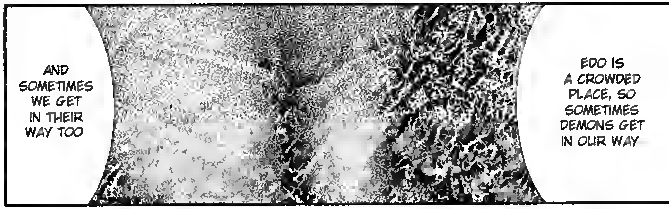
http://matsuki_mangalivejournal.com/

I SUPPOSE... IT'S INEVITABLE THAT TADAJIROU WOULD BE LIKE THAT...
sigh
...HAHA, WELL, THAT'S GOOD JUST DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO THEM
NO, SASAKI-SAN AND HIS SUBORDINATE, KUROTOBI-SAN, SEEM TO BE REALLY AGAINST DEMONS
sigh of relief
laugh laugh
THOSE THREE BROTHERS NO, THAT ENTIRE FAMILY HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABSOLUTELY DEVOTED TO PROTECTING THE GOVERNMENT...
glance
IF THERE'S ANYTHING HE WOULDN'T DO...
AND HE'LL DO ANYTHING TO ACHEIVE THAT GOAL...
EVEN IF IT MEANS HAVING A TOTAL DISREGARD FOR THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS...
I DON'T KNOW...

BUT I DON'T THINK THEY'RE ALL ENEMIES
WELL, ANYWAY, I'M AN EXORCIST, SO THAT DOESN'T EXACTLY MAKE ME POPULAR WITH THE DEMONS


AND SOMETIMES WE GET IN THEIR WAY TOO
EDO IS A CROWDED PLACE, SO SOMETIMES DEMONS GET IN OUR WAY

SHOULD ONE TRY TO RULE OVER THE OTHER?
SHOULD ONE TRY TO EXCLUDE THE OTHER?
NO ONE IS WILLING TO CONCEDE ANYTHING.
BUT NEITHER SIDE IS ABLE TO COMPROMISE

Rumble
But aren't all demons the enemies of humans?
SO I'M GLAD TO SEE THAT YOU AND THESE PEOPLE HAVE SUCH A FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP
YEAH, I GUESS SO
Give that back!
I'LL TAKE THE FOX BACK WHERE IT BELONGS
What a boring conversation.
Pluck
Ah!
I'M GLAD HIS WORK ETHIC IS SO LOOSE
AND AS FOR THAT PRIEST...

THERE'S STILL SOMETHING I HAVEN'T TOLD YOU
THIS LITTLE POWER STRUGGLE ISN'T JUST BETWEEN HUMANS AND DEMONS
ON ONE SIDE WE HAVE THE HUMANS
AND ON ANOTHER, WE HAVE THE DEMONS.
AND FINALLY THE FORCES OF HEAVEN ITSELF.

WHAT WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING!?
Wouldn't you like to know?
?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...?
HEAVEN IS ALREADY...
IT'S THE GOOD PEOPLE WHO ARE SOMETIMES HARD TO FIND.
YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON THERE BEING EVIL PEOPLE.
THAT'S THE DUMBEST THING I'VE EVER HEARD. SORRY, KID, LIFE'S NOT FAIR.
TELL US!
IF YOU DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU, THEN YOU'VE GOT TO THINK FOR YOURSELF.
POKE
USE THAT BRAIN OF YOURS!
Ow...
YOU'RE ALWAYS SAYING THAT I'VE GOT TO MAKE A CHOICE! BUT IT'S UNFAIR TO EXPECT THAT WHEN YOU WON'T TELL ME ANYTHING!

HEAVEN'S WAY ABOVE US, YOU KNOW.
HEAVEN DOESN'T SEEM TO KNOW ABOUT YOU YET, BUT OTHERWISE, IT CAN SEE EVERYTHING WE DO.
THEY HEAR EVERY-THING.
NOW, WHAT IF YOU WERE TO SAY SOME-THING THAT OUGHT TO BE KEPT SECRET?
...IT WOULD BE VERY BAD IF THEY OVERHEARD, WOULDN'T IT?
SO...
NOW DO YOU UNDER-STAND?
Wah!

THE "HEAVEN" I'M TALKING ABOUT ISN'T THE GODS OR BUDDHAS THAT PRIESTS TALK ABOUT.
IT'S LIKE THEY'RE LOOKING DOWN ON US FROM AN INCREDIBLY HIGH THRONE
IT'S A FORCE, A POWER OF WILL
BUT WE STILL HAVE SOME TIME BEFORE TSUYUKUSA AWAKENS AND THE PRINCESS'S CURSE IS LIFTED
WE CAN TALK HERE
WE'RE IN THE SAME "INTERVAL SPACE" WHERE WE FIRST MET
BACK THEN I TOLD YOU THAT YOU WOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE PRINCESS AND MYSELF
AND WE CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TEITEN HEARING YOUR ANSWER.
DID I REALLY UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF HIS WORDS?

The humans hate the demons, and are ignorant of Heaven's guidance.
Heaven watches over the humans and keeps the demons in check.
The demons hate the humans and chafe under Heaven's rule.
In order to maintain this balance among the three the dogs of Heaven must be ruthless against those who would cause a disturbance.
And any human or demon who realises what is happening is taken away.
But there are some who know to keep their mouths shut in exchange for power.
Crack

!
"Why is it that humans and demons quarrel?"
"What is it that separates them?"
"And what of Heaven?"

PRIESTESS!
PRIESTESS!
NENNANCE
WHY?!!!
WHY?!!
WHY DO YOU ATTACK HEAVEN?!
WHY?
WHY?
WHY DO YOU NOT GUARD HEAVEN'S NET?
WHY HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR GREAT DEBT?
WHY DO YOU DEFY HEAVEN?

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AND MAKE YOU THE NEW TEITEN.

ARE YOU SERIOUS!?
...WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!?
IF NOT, THEN WE WOULDN'T BE HERE.
OH MY...
WHAT?
DON'T YOU HAVE THE GUTS!?
.....
THE PRINCESS SERVES TEITEN AND HEAVEN'S NET - IN OTHER WORDS HER GOAL IS TO DESTORY THIS WORLD
WE DEMONS WISH TO PROTECT IT

DES-
PIC-
ABLE!!
GASP
..!!

< sfx: stab >
THUD
Priestess!
We are merciful, so we will allow you to go back.
THEY'RE LIKE GODS AND BUDDHAS COMBINED...
gasp!
We can still forgive you.
We forgive all.
slide
I'll take that.
As a promise

"RATHER THAN WAIT FOR DESTRUCTION TO COME GENTLY..
ONE MUST MEET IT HEAD-ON."
grab
crack
crack
!?
< sfx: whoosh >
!!
What!?
What is this...?

I HAVE ACCEPTED YOUR TRIAL
I CAME TO YOU FOR POWER
Bastard!! The shrine is to close with us still inside!!
PERHAPS NOT... BUT SOME-THING WILL HAPPEN
Damn you!!! You have no idea what will happen if you do this!!
I WANT A FUTURE THAT HAS NOT ALREADY BEEN DECIDED!!
SOMETHING DIFFERENT...
< SIX WHOOSH >
< SIX WHOOSH >

YOU FOOL!!
STAB
THIS IS UNFORTUNATE...
COMING HERE...
TEI...
THAT VOICE...
WAS NOT...
A WISE DECISION.

SNAP
TEN...?
WHAT .!?
!?
!
...WHAT THE...?
tug

Serialized in Monthly Comic Zero Sum from March to September 2006

The depths of dark-ness.
The sky the blackest black.
A butterfly in winter.
Is a snow-flake
I remember.

Benten
I remember that spring.
When we first met.

Amatsuki

By Takayama Shinobu

V.
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cleaning:
editing:
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You don't even remember what your own face looks like
LIKEWISE, I'M HASHITA
Hey! I'm here!
THOSE OF YOU WHO READ THE MAGAZINE SERIALIZATION PROBABLY DON'T REMEMBER ME - I'M JUUJOU WAKASA!
Ciao!
YES!! THIS MEANS WE MADE IT THROUGH VOLUME 4!
THAT'S RIGHT! THE ATMOSPHERE OF THESE ATOGAKI PAGES HAS BECOME SERIOUSLY TENSE SO FEEL FREE TO VENT!
Sheesh
THERE THERE, SISTER DEAR
DUE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO POSTPOSE YOUR APPEARANCE IT SIMPLY CAN'T BE HELPED
I GOT ALL DRESSED UP FOR NOTHING!!!
Hey, what's the meaning of this!? I didn't appear in this volume at all!
GA AA H!
STINGY BASTARD
hmph
THAT'S NOT GOING TO MAKE ME FEEL ANY BETTER ABOUT BEING CUT FROM THE VOLUME!! THAT STINGY BASTARD OF AN AUTHOR!!
IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR US TO APPEAR ON THE COVER!
That's right
Wait!
THE LIMITED EDITION!! NEXT VOLUME IS A LIMITED EDITION!!
Right?
SO GO AHEAD, RIGHT?
AFTER ALL, YOU DIDN'T APPEAR IN THIS VOLUME SO YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT IN THE ATOGAKI—

GAH!!
I GIVE UP. HEY, JUNK BOY, SHE'S TOO MUCH FOR ME SO I'M LEAVING HER TO YOU !!
WHAT!?
ME!?
NO WAY!!
SIGH
Facepalm
HMPH!!!
NOW YOU'RE LIMITING WHO CAN READ YOUR MANGA? YOU'LL DO ANYTHING TO OPPRESS PEOPLE, WON'T YOU?
(Comfy! laugh)
Sputter
Sputter
MAKE THOSE IDIOTS SHUT UP, AONE!!
Yes ma'am
YOU'VE GOT TO ATTACK HER WEAK POINT - LEAN CLOSE TO HER EAR AND WHISPER THREE TIMES "YOU'VE GOT WRINKLES YOUR BOOBS ARE SAGGING AND YOU'RE GETTING FAT"
You'll BE FINE!!
But such a simple attack will never work...!!
WE'RE PARTNERS! WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO ON MY OWN!!!? THIS IS LIKE FACING THE FINAL BOSS ARMED ONLY WITH CLOTH ARMOR AND A LEVEL 1 BAMBOO POLE!!!
Shake
Shake
Shake
Shake
Oof!
Oof!
Pull Pull Pull
MUCH BETTER
Smack
Cough Cough
WOULDN'T YOU SAY SO LILY-CHAN?

< T/N: Dragon Quest reference— I think? ... >

Hana-mi http://hana-mi.net
http://ameitsuki_manga.livejournal.com/

tweet
tweet
My new dolly!
Pull
...Lily-chan? What are you dragging...?
Pull Pull Pull Pull
Waah! Where did you get that thing, Lily-chan!!!?
Over there
Even in the free-for-all world of atogaki, you can't just do that!!!
Go back to the promotional ad page where you belong!!!
RIP
I'm afraid the young man must go, but please remember to read Amatsuki volume 5
I'll be in the next book, damn it!!
SHOVE
END 2006 TAKAYAMA

Big brother!!
Are you all done with work!?
日々はおだやかに過ぎていた
与えられた仕事をこなしていき
終われば妹と遊ぶ
くり返す日々 守るべき人々
それを疑ったことはなかった
「銀朱」の役目は単純そのもの
「守ること」ただそれだけ
この身そのものが盾
...Finally
THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY'S WORK.
sigh
I THOUGHT IT WOULD NEVER END.
sigh
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!
PEOPLE CAN'T SEE YOU LIKE THIS!

銀朱と梵天、二つの運命がここで出会う。
衝撃の過去編、始動――――――。

あまつき5

来春発売予定!!

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著者／高山しのぶ

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